

The YOUNG CRUSADER



WALTER SCOTT STORY



Class P77

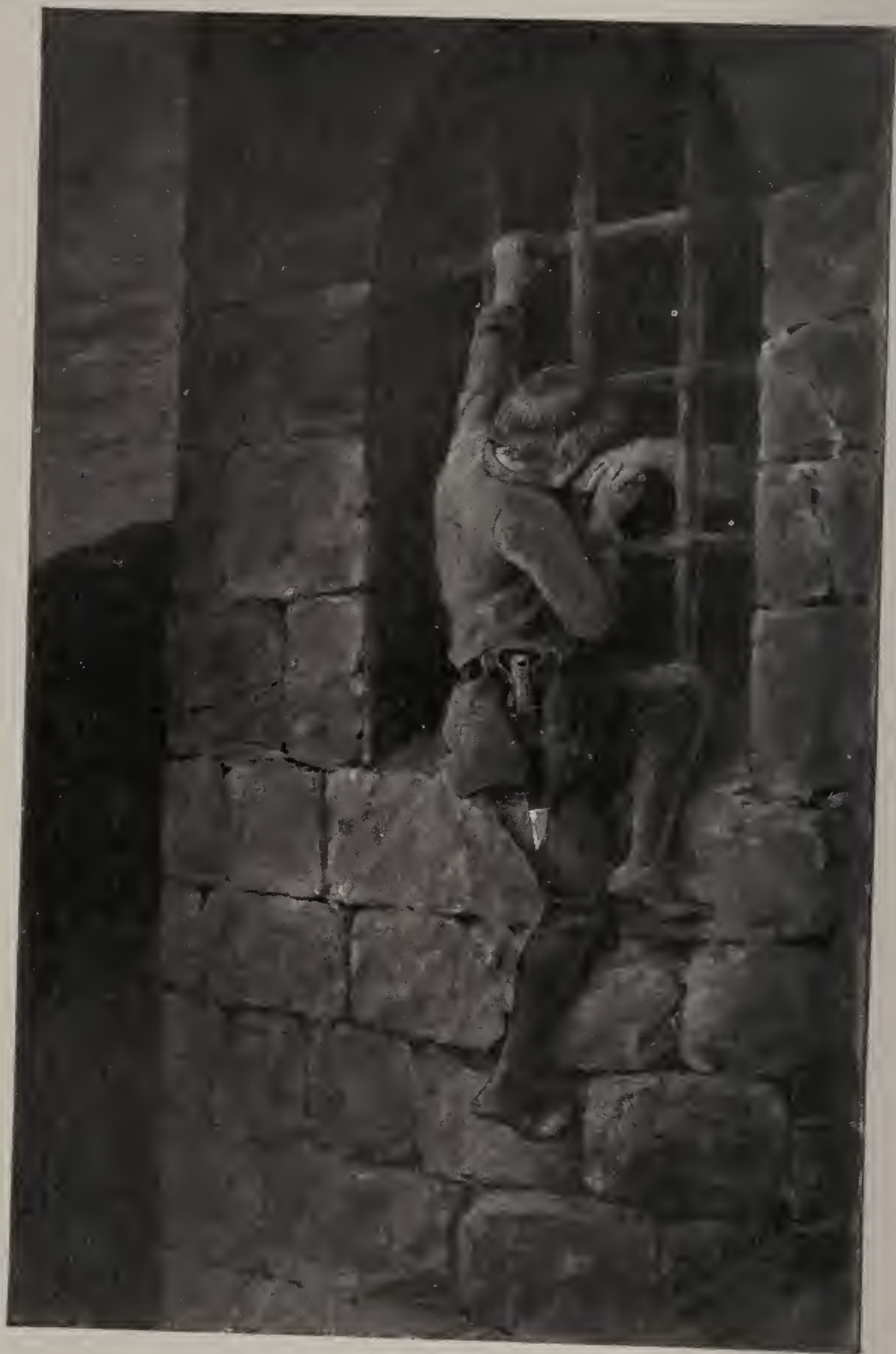
Book S8867

Copyright N^o Y

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

THE YOUNG CRUSADER

How Richard of Devon Served
Richard the Lion-Hearted



THE KING STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND, AND THE YOUNG MINSTREL
KISSED IT.—*Page 317.*

THE YOUNG CRUSADER

How Richard of Devon Served
Richard the Lion-Hearted

By
WALTER SCOTT STORY

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK T. MERRILL



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

PZ
58867

COPYRIGHT, 1923
By LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD Co.

All Rights Reserved

The Young Crusader

23-12448

Printed in U. S. A.

Norwood Press
BERWICK & SMITH CO.

NORWOOD, MASS.

© 1923 711791

SEP 10 '23

711-15-9 813-23

To my wife

MARGARET HELENA STORY

with admiration, gratitude, and love

ILLUSTRATIONS

The king stretched out his hand, and the young minstrel kissed it (Page 317)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
“Damascus steel, Edward”	46
He poured forth the pulse-stirring sword song	110
He flailed through the pressing Orientals	180
“Nay! I will not look”	222
“I have heard that song from the castle, yon”	292

The Young Crusader

CHAPTER I

ONE afternoon toward sunset, two youths, both beardless and little more than boys, astride sleek bay horses, rode along the forest road just south of Darby, the autumn leaves crinkling under the soft thud of the chargers' hoofs, and, emerging into the open, drew rein upon the brow of the hill upon which they found themselves.

Below them in a bowl formed by the terraced hills, those near at hand gorgeous in Jack Frost's harlequin robes, those afar off blue and hazy in the October sun, the hamlet of Darby lay, its thatched-roof houses among the oaks, and the fields golden in the afternoon light.

The foremost rider, Richard, the son of Edward, Baron of Darby, was tall,

straight, and lithe, his waist slender, his shoulders and upper body widening and giving promise of extraordinary strength. His face, brown as leather, was handsome, but stern and thoughtful for a lad's; his brown eyes, set wide apart, were keen as a falcon's; and his nose was straight. His neat person was clad in green, and he wore dagger and sword. His cap, also green, was adorned with a partridge feather, and was set jauntily on his fine head.

His companion, in brown, was a stout lad, very broad, with a wide face and as merry a pair of blue eyes as ever shone in the head of any one. His nose was flat, and his nostrils were visible, like two round holes drilled in his face. Peter was Richard's own attendant, and he was a light-hearted boy, with laughter in his heart and in his throat. Under his sturdy right leg was his unstrung crossbow, while at his belt hung a heavy hunting-knife, almost big enough to be dubbed a sword—the gift of his master. Perhaps in all England, although he was a

boy and had no fame, there was no better archer than he. There was certainly nowhere in the world anybody who had a more loyal heart. He loved the handsome boy of gentle birth whom he served, and this love was so great that he felt little of the sullen uneasiness the lower orders of the people were beginning to feel in this year of the Lord 1188—the uneasiness that in time made all Englishmen free men.

Richard's bay, slaving at the mouth, shook his head at the restraining rein, the drops of foam flying like spray in his impatient tossing.

Richard pointed to the west, beyond the village below them, and Peter nodded, for he could see the black speck in the far hills the other indicated. That black speck was home, the massive, moated castle of the valley lord.

“The horses are tired, Peter,” said the young noble, “but I think we'll ride on. There's a moon, and we should be home by midnight.”

“Is it best?” queried Peter, earnestly. “There’s been much trouble on the road since the king’s tax-men have been out.”

Richard straightened his lithe body and shrugged his shoulders slightly. His handsome face set sternly, and his eyes flashed.

“My father obeys the orders of the king in collecting the taxes,” he responded. “I see little reason for all this excitement. It shows a rebellious spirit in the people.”

Peter wisely made no comment. He realized that he and his superior, however friendly they might be as master and man, could not see things in the same way.

“We had best go on, then, at once,” he ventured.

Richard swept his eye about the glorious hills, and, pressing the bay with his knees, began to descend the dusty highway toward the hamlet, Peter, also looking about, following close behind.

They came to the foot of the hill and passed along through the few little cottages along the road.

“There’s some trouble here, sir,” observed Peter, his quick eye noting that only a few old women and small children were about the cottages and stables.

“We’ll ask at the next cottage, Peter. I had noticed that no men were about.”

As they rode on, the boy in green sat his saddle straighter than before, his shoulders thrown back, his head high. This hamlet of Darby was in his father’s barony, and Richard, although a kind-hearted, generous-spirited boy, felt angry at what seemed to be a sign of rebellion in the place.

In this day, the line between the lords and their inferiors in rank was clear and tightly drawn; in fact, it was not a line, but a gulf almost impassable. The ruling classes believed themselves divinely born to rule their tenants and vassals, body and soul. The young son of the Baron of Darby, although he would have scorned to do a mean act, was no exception. It may be difficult to realize, but people beneath his station were to him little more than mere *things*.

The next dwelling was at their right—a neat whitewashed cottage, set in a few elms a hundred feet from the road. Beside the doorway, on the west, sitting on a rude bench beneath a window fitted royally with some thin skin instead of glass, for glass was found only in the palaces of the great and rich, was a very old woman basking in the sun and chewing on a long wheat straw. Three little children were tumbling about in the yard before her among a number of hens and ducks and a lazy, friendly pig.

The two lads rode in toward the sleepy crone. At their approach the pig gave a grunt and set off on business about the corner of the cottage, and the fowls squawked and scattered. The three tiny children stood unsteadily on their plump legs, and stared with wondering eyes.

The old woman arose and bowed to Richard, and, without knowing why she did so, began to dust the bench upon which she had been sitting.

“Where are all the men?” asked Richard,

smiling at the confusion caused by their coming.

The old woman smiled up at him, her face wrinkling like a dried walnut and her toothless mouth opening wide.

Richard repeated his question kindly, but in a louder voice.

The old woman smiled still wider and nodded, then pointed to the nearest child, a little boy of four, dirty-faced, but pretty, and just then very sober.

"He's just four an' a half!" shrieked the crone, probably thinking she was speaking softly. She pointed to the other two in succession, giving their ages and names and beginning to tell their history.

"Where are the men?" bawled Peter, unceremoniously breaking in upon her recital.

A plump, red-cheeked woman of middle age came to the cottage doorway even before Peter shouted, and she bowed respectfully to Richard.

"What is it you wish to know, sir?" she asked.

“We wondered where the men are,” returned Richard.

The woman hesitated a moment, and in that moment a peculiar look flashed across her face.

“A good father from London is speaking before the church, sir,” she said, “telling us about the holy war and getting men to go with our king—whom the saints preserve—and the king of France.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Richard, his face shining. “We must hear him, Peter. Let us hurry.” He nodded to the woman in the doorway, and swung his bay about.

When they came into the road, they set off at a gallop toward the Darby church and market-place.

The Darby church was a pretty little structure of stone—a gift from Richard’s own father, for Darby in many troublous days had furnished more than its quota of good, stout fighting-men—set back from the road upon a rise of ground.

On the rude stone steps, bathed in the sun-

shine, stood a tall figure in a long brown robe, gesticulating passionately to a scattered group of rough men and striplings, as well as many women, gathered in an uneven semicircle before him. His voice was sonorous and far-carrying, and the riders could now and then catch a word.

Richard, followed by Peter, rode up the hill, and, without dismounting, pressed forward toward the church-steps through the throng of red-faced, sturdy villagers, who welcomed him in silence and glanced at him respectfully, without any indication of sullenness.

The priest ceased talking as Richard approached. He was very tall and straight as an arrow. He was tanned black with the sun. His face was lean and lined, and his eyes glowed with the fire of his passion. He fixed the boy with his glittering eye, and outstretched his hand toward him.

“Jerusalem,” he cried in his ringing voice, “is still in the hands of the bloody Saracen.

The Holy Sepulchre is to-day defiled by the infidel. Think you times are better than when Peter of Amiens returned from the long pilgrimage and waked all Christendom with the story of the Holy Place? Two gold pieces paid, and you might enter the city—and be forced to spit upon the Birth-place! Are you men of blood? Ten thousand men, twenty times over, have fought in the battles of the Lord, and yet to-day, even in this day of light and progress, the cursed infidel defies you. Would you wash out your sins—you, my lord, as well as this rout of low-born louts? Then, listen! His Majesty, Richard—whom heaven preserve—while he keeps the faith—is calling for you all to go to Jerusalem, as your fathers and their fathers did, to wrest away our own, and to put the Saracens to the sword and blot them from the book of life! It is heaven to go! It is a holy war. The coward's head and the laggard's shall rest no more easy. In the new year, the king, with the lord of France, goes to the third crusade. I tell you

it shall be the last, for it is given me to see that Richard, whose heart is like a lion's and full of zeal, shall win heaven—and destroy the hosts of evil.”

The passionate speaker ceased, and stood with hands outstretched, his eyes closed, his fierce, lean face set in a rapturous expression, with the sun red upon it.

“What about the taxes?” cried a rough voice, loudly, from the knot of villagers on Richard's left.

The priest opened his eyes and turned like a flash in the direction from which the voice came. His eye was keen, but he could not make out the speaker.

“The money is for the cause of the Holy War,” he returned. “Who would hold back?” In passionate utterance he told of the glories of war, of the glory of a war to win Jerusalem from the Saracen, and he held his hearers spellbound, so that for the time they were filled with zeal and forgot the oppressive taxes which Richard, the king, was gathering to carry on the war.

Richard leaned forward over his bay, his earnest eyes upon the priest, his lips apart. His being glowed with enthusiasm as the father told of the atrocities of the infidels and the courage of thousands of crusaders who had laid their lives down in the days before Richard's reign.

The priest at length ceased, and, stilling the cheers of his entranced hearers, lifted his arms and blessed everybody whose heart was moved to give body or substance to the crusade.

He descended the steps slowly and approached Richard, noting the boy's rapt face. The villagers, excitedly talking, passed in a body down the hill at once, leaving Richard and Peter alone with the fiery-tongued churchman.

"You are the son of the Baron of Darby," said the priest, looking up with a kindly eye. "I am Father James."

"Yes," returned Richard.

"I remember you well, son. I once visited your father when you were a small boy."

“ You will go with me, father,” cried the young man, looking down into the brown, stern face. “ You shall ride Peter’s horse, and Peter will walk. I would hear more—oh, more!”

Father James smiled in a rather hard way.

“ I think, my son,” said he, “ I shall go on. I have work to do. If I remember rightly, your father, the Baron of Darby, was in favor with Henry, the father of the king; and when Henry, fearful of the barons, razed a thousand castles throughout this England to break their power, the castle yonder where you live was left unscathed.”

Richard averted his eyes and flushed with embarrassment and anger. He knew that Henry had caused the assassination of Thomas à Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that friends of the deceased king were not greatly in favor with the clergy.

Father James laid a brown hand upon the boy’s horse. “ But you shall hear more of the Holy War, son,” he said; “ and you shall fight the Saracen.”

“Please heaven!” ejaculated Richard, fervently.

“Keep clean,” urged the priest. “Keep clean, son, keep clean from lust and greed, and—go!” He blessed the boy solemnly; then, turning, he strode away down the hill like the strong man he was.

“A good man!” exclaimed Richard.

“He is very hot for *us* to fight,” observed Peter dryly, his eyes twinkling. “He ain’t like the people. He don’t have to give the king one-tenth of all he’s got or go to the war.”

Richard stared at him sternly, but deigned no comment. He turned and started down the road, and Peter, laughing quietly, followed at a few yards.

The boys had a hearty but coarse supper in the village, then set off homeward through the valley.

Richard rode on through the dusk, silent, his handsome face still set in a rapt expression, and Peter followed, singing to himself.

The road lay winding up hill and down hill, through the woods and through the open. The stars, sharp and frosty, glittered in the sky, and the moon came up clear over the rim of the far-off hills and shot the valley with light.

Late in the evening the riders, swinging along at a brisk canter, issued from a stretch of forest on a hillside, and came into a bit of road fringed with rock and bushes. The road itself was here very poor, and the boys pulled to a walk.

As they turned a great boulder they saw before them another stretch of woods, and, upon nearing it, a figure—seemingly gigantic—with some long object under its arm, burst into view and stood in the middle of the road, appearing there as if by magic.

“Whoa!” sounded a great shout.

The horses drew up snorting, and the boys, gasping, stared with open mouths. Richard was the first to recover himself. His superstitious fear dispelled by the sound of a human voice, he whipped out his sword

and held his horse with a firm rein. Peter for the moment was like jelly, for he believed he saw a spirit. When, however, he was sure—or almost sure—that the figure was human, he deftly drew his bow and in a twinkling strung it and notched a bolt.

“Man or devil!” cried Richard, challenging.

“A man, my friend,” came the response; “and”—a laugh sounded—“a devil of a man at times. Put up your steel, and tell that fool to unstring his bow, or I’ll beat his life out with my sword belt.”

Richard rode forward, his sword lowered and seeming to drip moonlight.

“I’m no tax-collector,” said the stranger, “and no wayside robber—surely, not a *wayside* robber.” He laughed heartily, for he was a full-blooded man, loving life and very fond of his own jokes and gibes. He was a man of about forty-five, tall and slender, and yet with a great breadth of shoulder. He had a coarse face, an eye like

a live coal, and he had a scar running from the left side of his mouth around his cheek to the back of his head, which gave him the appearance of being always on a wide, twisted grin. He wore sword and dagger, and carried himself with the air of a king in his palace.

“Ah, a nestling!” he ejaculated, looking up as Richard reached his side. He laughed heartily at Richard’s stern look.

“What is your business?” demanded Richard, glancing about the hillside and at the dark entrance of the forest, fearing ambush.

“Have no fear,” said the stranger, turning up his grinning face, clearly discernible in the moonlight.

“I have none!” returned Richard, angrily, his fingers tightening about his sword-hilt. His blood moved faster, but he told the truth. He was never in his life to know fear of another man.

The man laughed in his boisterous way. “I’m lost,” he declared. “I have come into

Devon looking for the Baron of Darby, who I have learned sits at home like an old woman toasting his toes, and I've lost my way. Can you tell me ——”

“ I'm his son.”

“ By the Holy Grail! *No!*” The tall man with the scarred face stepped back a pace and stared at the young rider. “ Yes,” he cried, delighted; “ you are! You look like Edward as I knew him twenty years ago —when men were men, and peace hadn't settled down and made the whole world a monastery. Have you ever heard him tell of one Hugh Willock?”

“ Hugh Willock!” exclaimed Richard in supreme delight, his boyish heart instantly going out to this stalwart man in admiration and pride. For years he had heard his father speak of Hugh Willock in greatest praise; and when the Baron of Devon lauded a man for valor, the man he praised was a man of extreme bravery, even in the days when war was the common trade and heroes flowered in every camp and castle. “ Yes!”

he cried, slipping his sword to rest in its scabbard, and reaching down and taking Hugh's great outstretched hand in both of his. "You shall come with me! The castle is but a short way. Have you a horse?"

"Yes," answered Hugh. "He's up the hill in the bush." He turned as he spoke, and, putting two fingers in his mouth, blew a shrill whistle that woke the night echoes.

There was a movement a short distance up the hill, and Richard saw a rider coming slowly down to the road, leading a second horse. The second man approached.

Now again Richard and Peter gasped, and this time stared. The man who came at the whistle was clad in queer dark robes; he wore a turban, and his skin was as dark as night.

"You look, boy," said Hugh, taking the bridle of his own horse, a magnificent black stallion, with a white chest, "upon a Saracen—my servant. He will never talk to you, for he left his tongue behind him long ago." The warrior, who had fought many years in many lands, swung his tall body easily into

his saddle. "Let us go on, boy," he said, "for, in truth, I'm hungry—like a wild dog." He turned his long, narrow burden over to the Saracen. "I shall not be unwelcome. I bring in that box a gift fit for the king of England, and something else, too, lad—something greater, but unseen. Let us be on our way!"

The party moved, and set off briskly for the castle. Richard went on as in a dream, delighted, entranced. The sudden appearance of this man, of whom he had heard since he was a child, and the presence of the slave from the Orient filled him with yearning for adventure, and, with Father James's words still in his ears, seemed to bring very near the war to win the Saviour's birthplace.

CHAPTER II

RICHARD and Willock, knee to knee, rode into the stretch of forest before them and out along the open way through the rugged hills; and Peter and the Saracen followed at a respectful distance, the stout young bowman eyeing the dark man with awe and the fierce hatred all Europeans felt then toward the Orientals with whom they had warred through a bloody century.

Hugh Willock whistled to himself under his breath, but otherwise rode silently, save for an occasional question.

“Richard,” he remarked, suddenly, eyeing the boy keenly in the moonlight, “you are too trustful. You must not believe the word of every man in the road.”

“If you lied, perhaps we shall hang you, sir,” returned the boy, promptly.

Willock laughed in his hearty way. “If

I were an impostor, boy, my steel would have been through you these many minutes," he retorted, dryly. "It is a lesson of war I am teaching you. A brave soldier is cautious."

Richard made no response, but it seemed strange to him to hear this man talking of caution. Yet he was in earnest; and, of a certainty, if this soldier were cautious it was well for less tried men to be equally so.

"I did not sheathe, sir," he said, after a short silence, "till you were too near to draw."

"But I could have poniarded you," was the quick response. The tall man looked at the boy with keen scrutiny. "You are not angry because of a word of advice? And, still, I know advice is irritating to the young—more so than wounds. I was even that way long ago. Advice is galling to the conceit of youth, and perhaps always will be so."

"No, I was not angered," cried Richard, flushing. "I thank you. I had not thought of the dagger."

Willock laughed, and rode on again in silence.

Richard, although tired, was eager to gain information from this man whom he had surrounded with romance. His imagination was fired, and a thousand questions crowded to his tongue. But of a necessity he had to comport himself according to the other's mood.

The western range of hills, toward which they had been winding through woodland and along the rocky, rugged mountain-sides, now was close at hand, like vast walls rising to the autumn stars,—a clear, serrate line against the sky; and amidst the blackness of the forests and the crags there warmly glowed a cluster of yellow lights. The road, more rugged than before, led the riders toward these lights, and in ten minutes they could distinguish the vague outline of the Darby castle set among mighty crags. The great stone structure, with its crenelated battlements and towers, took form in the moonlight sifting down through the woods

above, a grim fortress high-perched like a brooding eagle, seemingly inaccessible.

Up and up the horsemen slowly climbed toward the lights. The moon was now beyond the hills to the left, and they were in the faint starlight. The wind, bracing with the smell of pines and the tang of the sea, blew strong and chill. There was no sound save the wind, the brawling of some near-by stream, and the click, click of the horses' hoofs.

The rushing of turbulent waters grew near and nearer, and at length the road came to an abrupt end at the brink of a wide stream, which flashed white twenty feet below among the rocks as it came plunging down from its source high in the mountain-top.

Directly across this foaming gulf, at a distance of two hundred feet, the great castle, warm with light, stood outlined clearly against the sky, and the heavy bridge, which formed the only approach, was swung up on its axle.

Richard cried out loudly, and on the op-

posite side of this natural moat three men approached promptly and gave response, at once letting the bridge come slowly and creakingly down to its rests on the bank where the travelers waited. The young noble led the way, and, with the others, was soon across and riding toward the stables, while the men at the stream immediately swung the bridge to its former position.

Richard and the welcome guest left the stables and went into the castle and toward the dining-hall.

Edward, the Baron of Darby, was a man of thrift. He did not waste his substance or live after the wild, unbridled manner not uncommon among his equals. He was proud of Darby, and proud of his castle. All his life he had wielded his sword; but by nature he was domestic, a man of progress and a builder.

In the Darby castle he had placed in a number of chambers windows of glass, the art of making which had been learned from the French. On his tables, always groaning

with mutton and beef, vegetables and wheaten bread, there was to be seen at times a vessel of sugar, although, of course, honey was the common sweet, as throughout most of England. Three times each week the dining-hall was strewn with clean straw.

Willock, traveler as he was, could not forbear to speak of the evidence of taste and wealth.

“You are brought up as in a king’s palace, Richard,” he observed. “I am—disappointed,” he added, oddly, half under his breath.

The dining-hall was a large rectangular room, well lighted with oil lamps and the blazing logs in a vast fireplace, and when Richard and Hugh entered the table was still laden with eatables, although most of those who ate there—Richard’s three sisters, his two aunts, and seven of his father’s officers—had finished their meal and left.

Edward, the baron, was alone with two small brown spaniels, sitting on a settle near the crackling fire, and at the vociferous

warning of the two dogs, which jumped from the settle and stood barking toward the door, he arose and stared at his son's stalwart, browned companion—very much as if he had seen a ghost.

The baron was a very big man, with leonine head and bull neck. Although massive, yet he was splendidly proportioned. He was handsome, too, although his face and neck were swollen with an excess of blood.

“Willock!” he cried in disbelief. “Hugh Willock! It can't be!”

“Aye! It is!” responded Hugh with a shout, his eye flashing with pleasure, and, ignoring the yelping dogs, he strode forward and grasped the baron's hand.

After this first greeting, cordial on both sides, Willock, who was almost as big as the baron, although cleaner cut, drew back and looked his friend over with a grave face.

“A pity! A pity!” he exclaimed, dolorously. “Man! Are you a pigeon!”

Edward smiled. “Have you supped?” he asked. “We will talk after.”

“No.”

Edward clapped his hands and shouted out for servants, two of whom came running for his bidding.

Hugh and Richard sat down at the table, and both ate their fill, the former burying his scar with every mouthful in his tankard of ale.

“Ah!” sighed Willock. “My throat is parched for this good ale. There is no ale in France or Spain—none even in Germany—to compare with it.”

When the hearty meal was over, the three men seated themselves in the rude, deep settles before the snapping logs, and, to Richard’s great delight, Hugh and the baron talked of the days of long before, and of the wars in which together or singly they had wielded their swords.

The two warriors became enthusiastic over the recital of their stirring adventures, and Willock, rallying the baron on his peaceful life, bluntly brought the conversation to the present.

“Surely, Edward,” he said, mopping his scarred, glowing face and fixing his bright eyes upon him, “you go with the king? You have no wish to have the ladies of the court send you a distaff, which was what his mother, Eleanor, and her ladies did years ago to stay-at-home knights.”

“I serve the king here,” returned Edward, his red face growing a bit redder. “He must have money. He had over one hundred thousand marks¹ from Henry, his father, and yet he must have more. I frankly tell you, Willock, that while I squirm much to think that Saladin has retaken Jerusalem, I do not like this crusade. Richard presses the country for money. He has sold earldoms, and he has sold William all the rights that Henry once had to Scotland.”

Richard coughed in warning, but his father laughed aloud.

“Hugh Willock, boy, is as true as the steel he wears, and I dare to speak before him.

¹ Mark. A silver coin worth about \$3.25.

No, I go not, Willock. I have pressed hard for the king's taxes, and, in truth, I dare not leave here. I am as good a Christian as the next, but the time is gone for this crusading."

"Yet you may cease pressing for the taxes now, Edward. The king's coffers must groan, for from the dogs of Jews he has got more—it is said—than from all England. You have heard of the killing at York? Upwards of three hundred took refuge there, and, besieged, all save a few killed themselves, and the rest were put to the sword by loyal Christians after they had beguiled them by giving pledge of safety."

"I have heard," said Edward, who, of course, had no pity for the Jews or horror at the treacherous massacre.

"The affair at York," went on Hugh, "as you may know, made the king raving mad, for the fools burned all the bonds and obligations taken, which otherwise would have escheated to him."

“I am done with the East,” asserted the big baron.

Hugh looked at him with falling face. He was plainly disappointed, and yet there was a peculiar twinkle in his eye.

“And you will sit still and pay the tax, Edward?”

“I will pay all that is required,” answered Edward, with a grim smile, which his old friend knew meant he would squeeze from his people money he should pay directly from his own coffers.

“Then you are rich?”

“No!” The baron denied it with a robust oath. “No!”

“It’s well!” exclaimed Hugh, and he brought his right hand down with a whack upon the edge of the settle. As Edward, his neck swelling, turned upon him at this unexpected comment, Willock slyly winked an eye at him, then nodded toward Richard. “An upstanding lad, old friend. Fine shoulders, keen eye, but too trustful.”

“A good-enough boy,” returned the

baron, carelessly, "but much of an old woman—full of queer notions—odd."

"I think him no more of an old woman than you," cried Willock, with his hearty, infectious laugh.

"I am done with the East, sir," said Edward, with a touch of anger in his voice. "But I swallow no taunts, dear friend, from any man. Have done!"

Sprawling back before the fire, the wanderer laughed loudly, but in a tone at which his friend took no offense. His scarred face glowed red in the firelight, and while he roared he winked again slyly at the other.

"I bring you an offering, Edward," he declared, sobering, "from an old friend in Lisbon—Carrano, whom you saved in Genoa. It is a gift fit for the king himself, and I have been tempted many times to hold it for my own."

"A gift? Ah, Carrano was a fine soldier—for one of Portugal. A gift? What sort of gift?" Edward sat up, curious as a boy, for gifts from afar off were in these days not

common to a small noble. His eyes glistened, too, for, as Willock well knew, greed was his great vice.

“Aye, Edward.—Hey! You rascal there!” In a sharp tone Hugh shouted to a serving-man who had come to the fire to put on another four-foot log of oak.

“Sir?” responded the man at the fire, turning when his task was done and mopping his half-scorched face.

“Find me the dark-skinned man, the Moor, who came with me this night, and fetch me hither the long box. But, stay!” he cried, suddenly, as the fellow turned. “He will not yield it to you. Bring him and the box.” He turned with a smile upon his firm lips, and refused to answer questions.

In a few minutes the baron’s servant returned, accompanied by the Saracen, who carried the long box under his arm.

“Come forward, you leather-colored dog,” ordered Hugh.

The Saracen body-servant, tall and

straight, came forward into the light of the fire, his dark face inscrutable, his eyes fearless.

As he stood out in plain view, the Baron of Darby arose impulsively, stretching his great frame erect, his nostrils widening, his eyes under their ledges of brow glittering like sword-points.

“A Saracen!” he exclaimed, his fingers working.

The Saracen eyed him steadily and showed no concern, although he allowed his gaze to fall.

Hugh Willock laughed. “Still have you no desire for the East? Hold! No man shall touch this dog—save me. But I see thy right hand itches, Edward, as all true Christian hands must itch to draw sword against the infidel. The box, Hazri, you hound.”

The Saracen, with the slightest sparkle in his eyes, bent his proud body and tendered the box to his master. Captive in a far land, Hazri had been about to die by flaying; and

Willock, ruthless on the field, but not a cold-hearted ruffian, had in a whim saved him. Although hating all Christians with an everlasting hatred, yet he loved Hugh with a whole-souled devotion.

“Go!” commanded Hugh, as he took the box. He flashed up a quick look at the slave. “Do they treat you well?”

Hazri inclined his head to show assent.

“Then go.”

When Hazri and the baron’s man had left the hall and the three nobles were again alone before the fire, Hugh with his dagger cut open the peculiar matting about the box, disclosing a black, highly polished case, took a key from his belt wallet, and turned the lock.

“This was sent to Edward, the Baron of Darby, not to an old woman,” he observed, his scarred face twisting in a wide grin.

“Have done!” exclaimed Edward, impatiently.

“Perhaps,” remarked Willock, still without opening the box, “you will best let me

make the present to this boy, Richard.” With his hand upon the box-cover, he turned and looked at Richard with his twisting, winning smile. “He must not remain here, shut up in the hills like a toothless old man,” he added, noting Richard’s excited, expectant face. “He itches for Palestine and the glory of entering Jerusalem with His Majesty, Richard the first.”

The baron arose, his face and neck scarlet with a rush of blood. His keen eyes flashed.

“Man!” he cried. “For less I have put steel through vitals!”

“But never through vitals of a man like me,” retorted Hugh, boldly. “Never!” He still did not open the box, and he raised his keen eyes and met the baron’s flashing, angry gaze.

For a moment or two the nobles stared into each other’s eyes, each fearless, trembling on the brink of a bloody quarrel. Then suddenly Hugh burst into one of his roars of laughter, and, the tension gone, Edward joined in his roar.

“You are not yet—quite an old woman,” declared the crafty soldier, who had patiently worked to arouse the other’s curiosity and anger. “So, boy,”—he turned with his laughing eyes to Richard,—“you must wait for this—only the Great One knows how long.”

He threw back the cover of the box as he spoke, and drew out a long object wrapped in red silk. Unrolling this silk, he disclosed a sword with hilt and scabbard of marvelous beauty and workmanship.

The weapon was four feet long, and the blade was encased in a sheath of some brown, soft leather, with tip and ferules of chased gold, and belt-rings of the same metal. The hilt and the straight crosspiece, which formed a cross, were curiously wrought of gold and silver. Upon one side of the hilt was a delicate image of the Saviour crucified, while upon the other were two hands clasped in amity, with a splendid diamond set above them.

Hugh whipped the great blade from the

scabbard, a glittering, flashing slip of steel over three feet long, tapering from about two inches at the hilt to a quarter-of-an-inch point. In the firelight it flashed like quiet water in afternoon sunshine, red as with blood. Hugh held out the naked blade before the wide-eyed, admiring father and son, with its Latin inscription, "For the honor of God."

"Damascus steel, Edward," said he; and put the tip to the floor and bent the blade almost double. "Made in Lisbon as a whole. The weight—for a man!" With a dexterous turn of the wrist he sheathed the magnificent blade and held the weapon toward the baron. "In honor," he said, slowly, when Edward took the heavy sword with a delighted face, "you must use it against the Saracen—or let it eat itself away in rust on the wall."

"A noble weapon!" exclaimed Edward, with sparkling eye. He loved beautiful things, and was—or had been—a soldier. "But—it shall rust."



"DAMASCUS STEEL, EDWARD."—Page 46.

Once more Hugh burst into a roar. "I would talk of old days together—alone—before the hour is too late," he said, bluntly. He chuckled as he saw the other fondle the rich gift from the fiery knight of Portugal, who had remembered him in so royal a way.

"To bed, boy," said the baron, bending his eyes curiously upon the other man.

With a last rapturous gaze at the wonderful sword, Richard, flushed of face and yearning to be off for the East, left the hall and went immediately to his chamber. From his window he could glimpse through a notch in the crags of his home an expanse of the Channel shining in the moonlight, and for a long time he stood there, wishing that he might sail that water with the king when he set out to win back the Holy City.

CHAPTER III

RICHARD awoke with a start to find his shoulder shaken by Rhoda, his eldest sister, a tall, dark young woman, whose beauty was a feminine counterpart of his manly comeliness.

It was morning, and the sun was streaming golden through the deep stone window-recesses.

“Your father!” cried Rhoda, chokingly, as she saw him open his eyes, her face working in excitement and distress.

Seeing his sister’s expression, Richard threw off the last clutch of slumber and half sat up, his eyes wide open. He looked about the room, and saw Peter, his comical, broad face very sober, standing near the doorway.

“What is it?” he asked.

Rhoda laid her head down on his coverlet and wept.

“Our father is with the host of heaven,” she answered, at length, arising. She calmed herself and dried her eyes.

With a wildly beating heart, Richard sat upright and beckoned Peter from the door. “Willock!” he queried in a hard tone, his memory quickly recalling the fiery words and looks between the two old friends. “Is he here—or gone?”

“Here, sir,” responded Peter.

“There was no violence, Richard,” said Rhoda, understanding his suspicion. “Our father had a falling fit, and, for all the leech, expired in the early hours. Aunt Matilda was with him. He spoke no word.”

“I’ll get up,” declared the young fellow. When Rhoda had left, he jumped out of bed, and, with Peter’s clumsy aid, dressed himself as usual, strapping on his sword. Then he went below at once.

The Baron of Darby had expired at four

o'clock in the morning, his death being due to the bursting of a blood vessel. He and Willock had been together, and the guest had given instant alarm, but nothing could avail.

After breakfast Richard looked upon his father's body, and immediately, as was necessary, took his position as head of the castle and lord of the fief.

In the middle of the forenoon he sent for Willock, and, when Hugh came, met him with a hard face. In his mind was the thought—and it was true enough—that the wanderer was indirectly the cause of the baron's death, by exciting him to fever heat, as must have been the case when they were alone.

Hugh frankly told him how the night had gone, and graphically painted his old friend's high enthusiasm.

"I loved your father, Richard," he declared, gravely, "and it is a sore blow to me, for, upon my word, he had sworn to go from Darby on the crusade. It was his enthusiasm

that undid him. 'Tis hard." The stern adventurer was very sober, and there was no doubt that he was feeling sorrow and keen disappointment at the death of his friend. "I doubt not you would have gone in his following. Alas! Now Carrano's sword must rust." He cast a covert glance at the boy's set face. "Unless," he added, as if the thought had just come to him, "you care to do as your father would have done, and head the men of Darby when Jerusalem is taken again."

"It is ill time to talk it now, sir," returned Richard, but his dark cheeks flushed and his eyes sparkled.

Hugh bowed his head, and, after a few tactful words of sympathy and proffers of help, left the apartment.

When he was gone, Peter, who had been present, approached his master.

"I like him little, sir," he said, "begging your pardon. He is not a good Christian, for I have seen him *kind* to the Saracen. He tells us there is much gold and silver to be

had in the East, and I know well it is right for Christians to gain it. I doubt not he would rather see a vessel of gold than the Holy Birthplace."

Richard made no response, but eyed him sternly.

"I crave pardon," said Peter, respectfully, although in a persistent tone, "but I have seen him *kind* to the Saracen—even as I said. How can he be a good Christian?"

Now Richard was kind-hearted, even tender, and this was a thing that made him seem odd, even to his father. He laughed slightly, for he could see that Peter, like most all those he knew, deemed kindness to enemies a fault and looked upon looting as a virtue.

"I am sure your good father must have believed in the gold in plenty, Sir Richard, for I have heard Sir Hugh say he had decided to go to the war."

"Enough!" cried Richard, flushing with anger. He knew his father's failing, but

resented Peter's rather plain speech. "You talk of what you don't understand—and impudently. Get away, and quickly, lest I have you well beaten."

Peter shrugged his shoulders, and, with a sly grin, left the room, too wise to venture further words.

On the following morning Baron Edward was put away to rest in the family vault, and thereafter for some time Richard found ample matters to keep him very busy.

He did not neglect his guest, Hugh Willock, for whom he quickly regained his great regard; and as the days went on, and he felt himself indeed the master and baron, he let his mind dwell more and more upon the crusade. He was full of the enthusiasm of youth, and of the ideals that wrought men to a high pitch of chivalry in the days when they went forth with real religious zeal to wrest Palestine from the Turk; and little was needed to make him decide to leave England.

Willock stayed on at the castle, a merry, useful companion, and artfully he fanned the boy's desire to go forth. He loved this frank, handsome lad even more, far more, than he had ever loved his friend Edward; but at times he stood at a distance and regarded him with a wrinkled brow and puzzled eye. Hugh Willock had spent his life in fighting. Many times he had won great sums of gold, and always he had spent them as easily as he had gained them; but now, ambitious to find place and even to become fixed in England, the day had come when he desired to fill his purse and to hold his treasure. A yearning for gold, therefore, was the father to his wish to set back again for Palestine. He realized, of course, that no such motive weighed with Richard, and talked accordingly. Yet he was too keen a man, also too good a friend, to try to deceive the young baron; he frankly stated that he expected to make money if he went, and that he desired so to do.

Richard understood that the seasoned

soldier was not actuated by the same zeal that moved him; but he had a strong affection for him, and, moreover, knew that his services would be invaluable.

Early in the year he reached his decision, and at the table one evening arose and declared to his household that he would muster a company in Darby and sail with the king when the time came.

With Willock's help he at once made preparations for the expedition, recruiting with care the most reliable men of his barony. He forced no one to go, for he wanted willing hearts. In the end he assembled a company of seventy stout Darby men, part of them swordsmen, the rest skilled archers; and all of them had seen service in the occasional battles among the barons.

The king's fleet was already lying at Dartmouth, fifty miles away, and it was learned that the vessels would probably sail shortly after Easter.

With ample guards in the strong castle, his eldest sister, Rhoda, in charge, her cap-

tain a trusty warrior who had been a boy with Edward, Richard felt quite at ease to leave England.

On Easter morning, a bright, clear day, the grim body of horsemen thudded across the drawbridge and wound down the mountain. Richard, in his coat of ring-mail, but wearing only his soft cap, his father's new sword at his thigh, rode before his men with the tall, scarred veteran, his heart swelling with joy and zeal.

The Darby men rode gayly along through their home hills, now and then breaking into a rude chorus.

"I like to hear men sing," observed Hugh. "But I would fain hear their song far away," he added, dryly. "We go on no pleasure trip."

The boy leader cast a proud eye back upon the body of stout fellows, upon whose steel caps and weapons the sunlight was dancing like a line of fire.

"These men will fight for me to the last drop," he asserted with conviction.

“The men of Darby are good fighters,” admitted Hugh. “I myself, boy, was born in Devon.”

“I hope, sir,” said the boy, “I shall merit your good opinion and regard.” Involuntarily he caressed the magnificent gift of Carrano, of Lisbon, which had come virgin to him so unexpectedly soon.

“I doubt not you will,” returned the other with a warm smile. “You have a weapon the great Richard himself might be proud to wield. You may have many a chance to test it before you see the Saracen, boy.”

“Yet I shall not draw it before I see them! Peter carries my own sword ready.”

Hugh smiled and glanced back at Peter, who carried his master’s sword at his saddle-bow. He was proud of Richard, and the boy’s enthusiasm and chivalrous ideals made him think of his own youth.

All day long the cavalcade wound through the glorious hills toward the seaport where the crusading fleet was lying; and at night,

at Willock's advice, they bivouacked instead of pressing on for the remaining short distance.

"The moon will be up early," he said, "and, if you wish, we can ride on then and be in Dartmouth by early morning."

"I would do so," answered Richard, eagerly, for he was impatient of delay.

After supper in the woods the company resumed its journey, and Richard and Hugh, now in hauberk and conical steel caps, with chain-mail covering neck and ears, rode in the lead as during the day. The sky had become somewhat overcast while they were encamped, and, although the moon had risen early, shining occasionally through a rift in the clouds, the way was dark and the going uncertain among the forests and the rocky defiles.

"Grand places for ambush," observed Hugh, casting his eye about as they passed along a stretch of road hemmed in on each side by gigantic boulders and rough walls almost sheer for a score of feet. "Were I

a collector for the tithe, boy, I should enjoy this ride but little."

"I think we shall meet no man here who would care to draw sword or arrow against us," returned the young leader. "We are now in the fief of Sir Hubert Grant, one of father's friends, though he came seldom to Darby. I understand evil days have fallen upon him. His castle was destroyed by King Henry, and it is said Sir Hubert left England long ago."

"And yet, boy," said Willock, "I feel sensible of some trouble to come." He held his head high, and glanced about the rugged way and at the banks under which they were riding.

They emerged at length from the defile, and silently, save for the jingle of steel and the tramp of horses' hoofs, passed along an open mile of road, coming at the end to another narrow, rocky pass. Beyond this gorge there was seen an open space, and farther beyond pine woods.

The cavalcade, all drowsy in the night,

trooped along the road among the rough walls of rock.

Hugh suddenly touched Richard on the elbow. “*I feel* eyes, boy!” he declared in a hoarse whisper.

Richard flashed a look at his friend, for the moment thinking he jested; but he saw that the warrior was loosening his long sword, and noticed, too, that his eyes were aglitter and that his face was set in a grim smile that made his scar stand out like a ridge.

“Then let us raise an alarm and drive through, sir. It would be our best chance.”

Hugh nodded, and on the instant raised his voice in a shout that rang in the defile and made every man-at-arms of the troop jerk straight in his saddle and awake with a thrill of fear.

“Darby!” shouted Richard in his clear, ringing voice. “For Darby! Forward!” Grasping his sword from Peter, who rode near, he struck steel to his horse, and with Hugh started toward the end of the gorge

at a fiery gallop, his startled company thundering after them.

For a moment it seemed as if Hugh had given a false alarm, and even as they bore on like the wind, Richard thought that the other had spoken but to try his courage and wit. But Hugh had given no needless alarm. In fact, he had more than felt eyes; he had seen a man and the glint of steel on the left bank.

As the troop thundered forward there was a queer twang, twang from the top of the walls, and one of the horses went down with a great thud, his rider thrown like a pebble and bawling out in terror till his voice went forever. Again the twang, twang sounded, and more than one man felt the whiz of a flying arrow.

The open way lay before them at length, and Richard and Hugh, with drawn swords, dashed forward and out of the rocks. As they galloped into the open, their men following like a wave, a knot of horsemen swept from the dark wall of the wood and

opposed them. They met with a great shock and a clashing of steel.

The men from the pines—a mere handful—cried out when they saw the numbers issue from the defile, and would have turned, but Richard's men surged about and hemmed them in.

Richard met the foremost rider, a big man in a black coat-of-mail, and their blades crossed with a fierce ring. They were pressed in so closely, however, even knee to knee, that their long swords were of little use, but each tried to dash his hilt against the other, to throw him among the swirling fighters.

In this surging press Hugh Willock was like a thing of fury. His great sword flashed like lightning, and he shouted out wildly in a strange tongue.

The combat was furious for a few moments, but the men from the wood were but seven, and the Darby men overwhelmed them and in turmoil sent them speedily down, horse and man.

When the last man was down save Richard's opponent, Hugh Willock, with a great shout, pressed his horse forward among the Darby men and the fallen, kicking horses and vanquished ambushers and uplifted his blade.

"No!" roared Richard, seeing his intention. "No!"

A dozen more swords were already raised to help hem in the last horseman, Richard's adversary; but the men-at-arms, heeding their leader's stern command, stayed their hands, yet holding their position.

Richard dropped his sword, and, leaning forward, suddenly grasped the other's sword arm and with a terrific wrench disarmed him. Then, grasping the man about the waist, he tore him, big as he was, from his saddle.

The horses reared as the two interlocked in this fierce embrace, and down went the young lord with his arms about the man in black mail. They fell among dying men and plunging horses, but escaped injury.

As soon as they were down, Hugh forced

back the crowd, and, jumping from his horse, hastened forward to his young friend, who was uppermost, still holding the big man with whom he had engaged. Willock was no laggard at such a time. Throwing himself forward, he dragged the two fighters away from a dying horse, whose hoofs threatened to brain one or both, then held his dagger to the throat of Richard's captive and grimly bade him let go the boy and arise.

Releasing the man, Richard scrambled to his feet and retrieved his sword, which he gave to Peter, who was half crying with joy to see Richard arise unhurt.

The prisoner was now standing with Hugh among the Darby men. He was a very big man, almost as big as Willock, and bore himself without a trace of fear. His face was dark and stern, and showed no emotion as he looked upon the dead bodies of the men who had issued from the forest with him.

"This was a mistake," said he to Hugh. "I looked for another, having sure word

that he would come this way. We looked for no such force."

"But your archers," observed Hugh.
"They were scant of loyalty."

"A mere half-dozen," returned the other.
"I am glad they did not remain."

Richard approached at this moment, and he stared at the man with a flushing face.

"Sir Hubert Grant!" he stammeringly exclaimed in astonishment.

Sir Hubert was as much surprised as the boy. He smiled at him, admiration in his eyes.

"You have great strength and promise, Richard," he said. "I have been deemed a strong man, but I am not your equal."

"There was no late enmity between you and my father, now dead, Sir Hubert?"

"None, Richard. This is a great mistake." The stern-faced noble repeated what he had told Hugh Willock. "So your father, my good friend, is indeed dead?"

"Yes."

"He was a more fortunate man than I.

We were much together in other days. It ill beseems me, perhaps, to say it, but your father was at times indebted to me."

"He so stated many times," responded Richard, promptly, and put out his hand in friendship. "You saved his life, and turned King Henry's anger from him."

"But could not from myself in the end," put in Sir Hubert, dryly. "I have no quarrel with the past, however, not even with the wrong Henry put upon me, who had served him so well." The tall man spoke without passion, but his face was moody, and there was bitterness in his voice.

Richard felt a strange embarrassment in the presence of his prisoner. He remembered him as a great lord, a friend to his father, and remembered the time when Sir Hubert had been very kind to him.

"You were looking for some other, friend?" queried Willock.

Sir Hubert proudly looked the stalwart, clean-cut soldier in the eye, meeting a glance as steady and haughty as his own.

Richard quickly made the two known to each other as equals.

“As I stated,” answered Hubert, after a few courteous words to Hugh, “it was a mistake. I have held this boy as a baby in my arms. I have no quarrel with him.”

“Yet,” said Hugh, “I like this ambush very little.”

Sir Hubert shrugged his shoulders, and turned to Richard.

“I will be frank with you, Richard. I am attainted; I am outlaw, and like a hare in the fields.”

“Attainted!” exclaimed Richard, astounded. “Why?”

“I am undone by Mercado,” returned Sir Hubert, his stern face growing very hard. “I had taken the Cross, as all men know, and had served Henry faithfully against his faithless sons. Even though he had broken my power, I was with him when he made his shameful treaty with Richard on the plain near Tours and fell into a raging fit when he learned that John, his beloved son, headed

the list of those leagued with Philip of France against him. Mercado, the king's collector, came into my barony, routed me, cleaned the country of the last mark and kept it for himself, reporting me to Richard a traitor and rebel. In this bitter time my wife and two of my daughters have been lost—killed with arrows! Think you I love Mercado—or the king, who cares nothing for England save as his mine for money?"

Hugh ejaculated at this recital, told in the calm of terrible passion, and he sternly waved back the press of Richard's men, who were listening with wide eyes and bated breath.

"Stand back!" he ordered, sharply. "Stand back, louts!" He turned to Sir Hubert with an expression not unkindly. "You speak, sir, dangerous words. We go to the king now."

"I speak the truth," returned Hubert, curtly. "I learned that Mercado was coming this way to Dartmouth. As for my words, I fear no man and no fate."

Richard spoke quickly, his generous spirit touched with compassion for his father's unfortunate friend, the once great baron now an outlaw.

"Yes," he cried, "we go on the crusade. Come with us to the king, and I doubt not he will do justice."

"I prefer the hills," said Sir Hubert with a slight smile. "Mercado has me bound in lies."

"The king would have no such betrayal as you tell!" exclaimed Richard. "I know it! Nay! Come down with us. I would love to see you made right. I feel it my own cause to set you at peace." Kindness and eagerness to do good throbbed in the boy's voice, and his dark, handsome face shone with generous purpose.

"Can he give back my dead? No, Richard. I go not willingly, for it would do no good."

"You have the truth of it there, Sir Hubert," agreed Willock, curtly. "You are unfortunate. I know Mercado, and—"

well, in truth, I would delight to have him come this way *now*." Hugh's face set in his grim smile, and he nodded to the outlawed noble.

"I thank you, sir," said Sir Hubert, returning the other's friendly glance.

"If you will not go," exclaimed Richard, "then I will even speak for you. I will see the king and move him to right you in this matter. I pledge you!"

Hugh threw up his hands with a little laugh.

"A new cause," commented he, dryly. "Think you the taking of Palestine so light you can take another?"

"A thousand! I can take a thousand for the right!" returned Richard. "Give me your hand, Sir Hubert. We must go on. You are free to go."

Sir Hubert, with softened face, took the boy's hand and then embraced him.

"You have a generous spirit, Richard. If you can get favor, my third daughter—the last—as fair as any maid in Devon

—shall say prayers for you to the last day.”

“I pledge you my effort for your righting, Sir Hubert,” promised Richard, fervently, with shining eyes. “Now, God be with you, sir.”

At a sign from Richard, the man who held Sir Hubert’s sword yielded it to the owner. Sir Hubert sheathed the blade, thanked Richard again very warmly, bowed to Hugh, and then, mounting his horse, disappeared from view along a downward path in the forest.

Richard and Hugh mounted their horses and started off again toward the sea.

It was early morning when they came out of the forest, and the birds were beginning to chirrup and sing blithely. There was warmth in the air, and the smell of day and of the ocean came with the light. When they reached the top of the last ridge of hills, Richard, grave of face, with firm lips, and a generous purpose and zeal in his heart, was riding apart from all. The sun was rising

red on the sea rim and shining on the waters below them, over the hills and on the town of Dartmouth and the vessels of the king's fleet in the harbor.

CHAPTER IV

THE few cottages and fishermen's huts comprising the town of Dartmouth lay some distance from the water, clustered among century-old oaks. Ordinarily it was of little importance. Now, however, chosen for the departing place of most of Richard's English following, it was transformed into a seething, bustling city. All about on the hills, near and far, even to the crests, stood the snow-white tents of the crusaders, each knot of canvas dwellings the transient town of some company off for the war and marked by the captain's fluttering banner.

Many hundreds of stout men crowded among the tents, along the shore and on the highway, men of all ranks in life, lord and serf, brown-faced, stern-eyed men who had known war for years, and stalwart youths,

raw save for rough life at home, but eager to try their steel in far lands. Horsemen in steel coats and caps jangled down the road, gay with color, laughing, jesting, the sun aglint upon their trappings. Swordsmen and archers and sailors swarmed everywhere, loud of mouth and jovial; and nobles and lords, in silks and in steel, rode among the rabble on magnificent horses, proud of face and mien.

Along the highway, which ran in conformity with the shore, under the trees were booths where could be bought ale, swords and daggers, ribbons and trinkets, and wares of all kinds. Queer, foreign men juggled knives and balls with gaping groups about them; and here and there a smooth-tongued fellow or an old woman agreed to tell for a mere song all that should ever occur to him who would stay to listen—and pay.

It was a motley, marvelously strange and inspiring scene, flashing and dancing before the eye like sliding, swift-moving pictures.

Nor was this encampment on the land the

only inspiring picture before the eye. Upon the harbor surface, blue as heaven and sparkling in the morning sun, the great fleet of carriers and war-galleys lay ready to take this host out upon the sea. And the sight of these vessels, with their streaming banners and signs of busy life aboard and about them—the loading of stores going on every minute, while scores of small boats darted here and there among them—seemed the first real step to romance and to the war in the land where the mighty Turk had maintained his stand for two hundred years with sword and spear.

Richard and his men were dumb with wonder as they rode into Dartmouth among the war host, and looked upon the city of tents and the vessels as if they saw a vision.

“It is grand!” exclaimed Richard.

“Uh! Uh!” grunted Peter, his mouth wide open and his blue eyes protruding like plums.

“Yes, it is good,” said Hugh Willock, looking upon the scene with a trained and

critical eye. He laughed at Richard's frank delight and astonishment; but, used as he was to war and the pomp and glitter of it, he straightened his broad shoulders and flushed slightly with ardor. In truth, the sight was a goodly one, and he was proud of England. "Yet, boy," he said, his proud head high, his brilliant eye twinkling with good humor and pleasure, "this is but a small part of the king's army."

"I can hardly believe," returned Richard. "Can London itself hold more?"

Hugh laughed outright. "This is a gay showing," he admitted. "These are mostly fighters, and I like what my eye sees; but, lad, this number would melt before Saladin like snow in the desert. You must not belittle the Turk in the mind; neither give him the advantage of your fear. Have fear of nobody; yet meet every man as worthy foe-man, and no less than truly your better shall drive through your hauberk."

"I find it hard to believe, sir," returned Richard, frankly.

“Wait, then, till we land in the East, and you shall see, if I mistake not, as great an army as ever was. As for the Turk, boy,—he is without count.”

The Darby troop rode down the road, holding together among all who came and went, Hugh taking the lead to find a suitable spot for their encampment.

Under a grove of towering oaks, now scantily clad in their few remaining russet leaves, they came to a row of booths where ale, relics, charms against disease and wounds, weapons, sweetmeats, and the like could be purchased; and they rode slowly here in curiosity, although Hugh sharply repulsed those who came out to shriek the merits of their wares.

At the end of this row was a small brown tent, marked with curious geometric signs, before which, basking in the sun, squatted a very lean old man in black, with a skull-cap pulled down to his ears, leaving a fringe of gray hair visible, and enormous, horn-rimmed spectacles astride his peaked nose.

He looked exceedingly like a solemn, sleepy bullfrog on the edge of a pool. At his feet on a little stand was a crystal ball, and this he was idly tapping with a gilded wand.

As the Darby men came down the highway, the old man lifted his head and glanced with keen, deep-set black eyes at the straight, handsome noble and the stalwart soldier with the scar. He arose suddenly, as if on a spring, a very tall, exceedingly lean figure, and stepped out toward the horsemen.

“I would tell your fortune, Sir Richard,” he said in a deep, mellow tone, extremely surprising from one of his age and thinness, and, lifting his wrinkled, aged face, he put a hand on the boy’s horse.

Richard involuntarily reined in, astounded at this address from one who had never seen him, never thinking that the stranger had made it his business to learn his name.

“Tush!” exclaimed Hugh, impatiently, yet also reining in and thereby bringing the

whole company to a halt at a respectful distance. "It is nonsense! Get aside, old thin shanks!"

"I am a true soothsayer," declared the old man to Richard, by sure instinct seeing that the boy was independent of the other. "Slip me from your plenty a gold piece, and I will forecast your future."

"Tush!" repeated Willock.

The soothsayer turned his deep-set eye upon Hugh and boldly met his haughty, contemptuous glance.

"In thy face, sir," he said, still with his eye unfaltering upon him, "I see greed and secret purpose."

Hugh reddened under his bronze, and anger flashed in his eye.

"Yet you are a true man," went on the fortune-teller, speaking quietly and with no quailing in manner or tone. "You shall return from the crusade with honor, but without that which is in thy heart—gold."

"You impudent dog!" flamed Willock, but laughing.

“ I will give you a gold piece,” put in Richard, calmly, and from his purse he took a coin and dropped it into the cup of the old man’s ready hand.

“ You were cradled, Sir Richard, under a lucky star,” began the soothsayer, instantly, “ and fortune awaits thee. You will never know treachery from your friends—nay, from none who swear you faith. That is good fortune—to have true friends. Only a true heart can win and hold the true. But—patience, young sir. At the king’s elbow you shall fight; you shall look upon Jerusalem, but never enter it; and you shall render unto England’s present king a service men shall tell a thousand years. In the end you shall die in Devon where your father died, full of honor and years.”

Richard flushed with pleasure, and, in truth, drank in all this splendid forecast like a draught of sweetest wine; for his own tongue or dream could have built for him nothing nearer the heart’s desire.

Even Willock seemed impressed. The

ironical smile faded from his visage, and his fingers strayed toward his purse.

The old soothsayer noted Hugh's face and moving hand, and he looked at him with a twinkle deep in his keen eyes, a smile on his seamed, parchment-like face.

"And you, sir," he said to Hugh, "whom I have seen many times, you shall likewise die in Devon—as rich as a York Jew. How like you that?"

Willock burst into a good-humored laugh.

"You're a clever old rogue," he cried, flipping him a piece of money. "Yet if your telling be true, I get but exercise for my journey, and would better stay scatheless in England for my fortune."

"Even so," returned the soothsayer with his wrinkled grin. "But you are too young to stay at home now." Chuckling, he moved back to his tent and squatted again upon his haunches.

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Richard in awe, as he and Hugh started on. "Do you think it can be true?"

“Nobody can call a soothsayer a liar, boy.”

“I feel in me, Sir Hugh, the power to do great things for the king and right.”

Hugh did not laugh, but he glanced at the boy with a half-sad, half-humorous smile. He remembered the days when he had felt so, felt that he was destined to be great and to do wonderful deeds. He knew it was in all youth to dream great dreams and to feel that they could help greatly to make the world go right. He knew it was well for youth to feel so. Yes, he had felt very much as Richard was feeling, and here he was at middle age and had done nothing save to make men say he was brave.

“Your conscience must tell you what to do, Richard,” he said with real simplicity, anxious to say the true thing and yet not dull the boy’s gorgeous, flimsy dream. “You are a good lad, good in a way I hardly understand, and will do right. Doubtless you will even see the king close at hand—perhaps save his life. Who can say?”

A suitable place for camp was found south of the town, on a slight elevation overlooking the harbor, among companies of other Devon men; and shortly, under Willock's instructions, the Darby crusaders were comfortably disposed.

When camp was made, Richard rode back toward the village to tender himself formally to the king's marshal.

Upon his return to camp he slipped from his horse, throwing his rein to Peter, who was awaiting him, and strode toward his tent.

Willock, tall and broad, a noble figure in his glittering coat of ring-mail, was standing by the flagpole, where Richard's banner flashed in the sun, his head bare, and before him was a short but exceedingly broad man, likewise in steel.

The two were talking in a friendly way and laughing heartily.

"Here is the lad, John Halmer, Sir Edward's son," cried Hugh, as Richard approached. There was pleasure in Hugh's

rugged, scarred face as he held out his hand toward the boy.

John Halmer, of prodigious chest and shoulder, turned a scarlet, merry face upon the young baron, and formally acknowledged greeting.

“An old friend of mine in many countries, Richard,” declared Hugh, as he named Sir John; “and now becoming great. He even speaks to the king.”

“I am come to warn this quarrelsome friend of mine, Sir Richard,” said Halmer. “I saw him arrive, and of old I knew him to be quick with his sword. This must not be now. Times change, and I seem to see that the day will come when war is rare.”

Hugh threw back his head and loudly laughed at this most absurd statement. War now was an honored trade—a gentleman’s only trade.

“Many are like old women,” he cried; “but there are still men of mettle left. I think Richard here would brook few insolent

words from any man—though he wore a crown.”

Richard laughed, but his eye flashed.

“ You were always somewhat of a brawler, Hugh, in camp,” asserted Sir John, bluntly; “ and, as I say, times have changed—whether we like it or not. You must take my service in good part. Six men sail not from Dartmouth, who but for quarrels would have shared in the glory of this godly mission. Let me tell you the king’s pleasure.” The jolly-looking knight drew from his belt and gravely read the army rules as to brawling:

“ Richard, by the grace of God, King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, to all his men who are about to journey to Jerusalem by sea—Health. Know that with the common counsel of approved men we have had the following regulations drawn up. Whoever board ship shall slay another is himself to be cast into the sea lashed to the dead man; if he shall have slain him ashore he is to be buried in the same way. If any one be proved by worthy witnesses to have drawn a knife for the purpose of striking another, or to have

wounded another so as to draw blood, let him lose his fist; but if he strike another with his hand and draw no blood, let him be dipped three times in the sea. If any one cast any reproach or bad word against another, or invoke God's malison on him, let him for every offense pay an ounce of silver. Let a convicted thief be shorn like a prize-fighter; after which let boiling pitch be poured on his head and a feather pillow be shaken over it so as to make him a laughing-stock. Then let him be put ashore at the first land where the ships touch. WITNESS MYSELF AT CHINON.

"There!" exclaimed Sir John, breathing hard with his reading.

"Phew!" ejaculated Hugh Willock with a contemptuous grin. "Shall a man then swallow hot words?"

Halmer laughed. "I tell you, man, the camp is strict. Never saw I such a one."

"Will you dine with us, sir?" asked Richard in his quiet, smooth tones.

"I cannot, thank you," returned the stout man. "I am engaged to Mercado, who arrived this morning."

“When do you think we sail?” inquired Hugh, with a quick glance of warning at Richard.

“I think in a few days. But I understand the king is not to go, but will go to Tours, where will be the main force of our army, and board our fleet at Marseilles.”

“Sir Richard greatly desires to see him.”

“No doubt.” Sir John coughed, for most men wanted to see the king.

“I myself,” said Willock, with a grin, “am content to see from a distance. As you know, I served his brother, John.”

“A rascal!” whispered Halmer, explosively.

Hugh nodded.

“I must be going.” Sir John looked embarrassed for a moment because of his indiscreet exclamation before one almost a stranger, and, bowing, he strutted down the incline, mounted his horse clumsily, and rode away.

“A good man, Richard,” commented Hugh, “but a little timorous. Yet he

climbs! But it is dinner time." He sniffed audibly as he caught the fragrance of the cookery in the camp, and made his way toward the tent where he and Richard were to have their meals.

With a smile at the stout horseman disappearing in the press down the highway, Richard turned and followed Willock.

The rest of this day among the bustling, merry crowd of soldiers, lords, jugglers, chained gangs of men from the war-galleys, loutish, rolling fellows from the ships, fishermen, and peddlers passed with Richard like a feverish dream. The sight of this assemblage and the stir and pomp fired his burning enthusiasm still higher. Greedy for knowledge, he took his way everywhere. Although he bore himself sedately and showed his feeling not at all, save for the luster of his eye and the flush of his handsome face, yet within he was as dazed and dazzled as a country lout on his first visit to a fair. Hugh, understanding his feeling, was very patient, and was as glad to give in-

formation about arms and deportment as Richard was eager to receive. He knew many of the leading men of this gathering, most of whom were soldiers like himself who had fought in a dozen countries, and he pointed them out and told their deeds of heroism and savagery, or both.

When Richard threw himself down upon his couch in the late evening, he was very tired, and yet found sleep elusive—as difficult to catch and hold as a swift-moving shadow. His brain was afire and alive, and a fantastic jumble and merging of all he had seen during the day marched endlessly before his mind's eye. At length, however, he did fall asleep, to toss fitfully in splendid dreams.

The sweet, strong breeze from the sea crept over the hillside, and the Darby banner fluttered before the young baron's tent. The moon rose in the east, and the night shadows shortened as it climbed up high and higher among the glittering April stars.

Peter, who slept in the rear of the pavilion, snored heavily and peacefully, and Richard

now lay motionless in the deep and victorious slumber of youth.

A shadow in the shadow of the tent—black against black—moved toward the entrance, and at length a man squirmed across a dreaded ribbon of moonlight at the opening and then was within the tent and moving serpent-like toward Richard's couch.

The intruder, holding his breath, reached the lad and leaned over him. He gasped slightly, for as he stood there he caught the glisten of the hilt of the Lisbon sword. Cautiously he leaned farther over and outstretched his hand, joy warming in his heart.

At this moment, as if fortune whispered warning in his ear, Richard awoke, glimpsed the face above him, and, with a fierce, low cry, reached up his arms and encircled the thief with a terrible grip.

The intruder wildly cursed, but Richard, aroused, fought like a tiger and twisted the creeper over. In an instant he had him on the turf, his young fingers like rivets on his gnarled throat.

“A light!” cried Richard, as he heard Peter cry out in fright and stumble about in the darkness.

Peter made such haste as he could, and soon held the camp lamp down near the man Richard was still holding. It took but a very short time for the two lads to bind the fellow.

The thief was a stout man of thirty, with a fierce but intelligent face. He bore no weapon but a dagger, and was dressed as a serf, yet was clearly a soldier.

“Your name?” demanded Richard, sternly.

“Staye, of London.”

“A soldier?”

“Yes.”

“You know the law, Staye?” asked Richard at length.

The thief grunted. He knew it well.

“Why did you come here?”

“Your sword, sir.”

“My sword?”

“Yes. It is given out that you have a

sword which shall save the king of England and carve the way to fortune."

"Oh!" exclaimed Richard, angrily. The old soothsayer evidently had been making him a marked man. "Do you think the sword I hold will carve fortune for any man?"

"I so understood."

"You are wrong. You have well earned a shaved pate and hot pitch." Richard looked down upon him sternly, yet was sorry for him. "Suppose," he said, suddenly, "I let you go—forgive?"

The man looked at him incredulously, but with hope in his eyes. He was not used to seeing mercy, and did not expect it.

"You will do as you see fit, sir." Unknowingly wise, or wholly resigned, he made no plea for mercy.

"Cut him free, Peter."

"But, Sir Richard," began Peter in remonstrance, for his anger at the man was high, and his code knew little mercy to any below those he served.

“Cut him free!” commanded Richard.

Peter reluctantly obeyed; and, believing he dreamed, Staye arose, standing straight before the young baron.

“What service, sir?” inquired the thief, never for a moment doubting that he must render value for mercy.

“Service, rascal? None. It is my mood. Get away!”

Staye stared at him speechless, a peculiar look coming to his fierce visage. He *must* be dreaming. Never was anything like this where he had soldiered.

“Get away!” repeated Richard, with a slight smile.

With a last searching look at the lord who forgave, the rascal slipped from the tent and was gone.

“Huh!” snorted Peter, openly, yet even then dimly remembering that his master had saved him from more than one merited punishment. “Shall I watch, sir,—for my sins?” he asked, at length.

“No, Peter,” answered Richard, lightly.

“Neither for mine. I would not have you overworked. He will not return. We will sleep.”

Placing his undrawn sword beneath a blanket, Richard went back to his couch, and, little thinking that his mercy was to bear rich fruit, returned quickly to the land of slumber.

CHAPTER V

RICHARD made no mention of the midnight adventure to Hugh Willock, of whose views he had no doubt; and he laid upon Peter a strict injunction to secrecy. Although he had no regret for his action, yet he looked upon it as boyish, and was quite conscious that his friend and most men would so regard it. He was young enough to value very much men's weighing of his acts, although willing to brave strife and ridicule for what he believed to be right.

The morning was bright and clear, warm, yet bracing with the cool and the tang of the sea. Overhead the sky was sapphire, with flecks of fleece; behind lay the rugged, wooded hills, and before, the Channel glittered and flashed in the sunlight like a vast coat of chain-mail. The southwest breeze blew its promise of spring over all the hope-

ful, greening land; and the winged songsters chorused in an untaught and matchless harmony.

Richard before his pavilion again drank in the camp with his eyes, now awake and bustling, and breathed happily in the unthinking joy of living. He was steady now, grown a man; but, for all his poise, the blood still ran exuberant in his veins at what he saw.

At breakfast he talked of the crusade and of his promise to Sir Hubert Grant, and Hugh noted with satisfaction that his fever of delight had died away to steadiness, in no way lessening enthusiasm.

“I will speak to Hazri of our numbers,” said Hugh; and turning to the Saracen, who stood near for his bidding, he spoke rapidly in the dark man’s native tongue.

Hazri cast a disdainful eye down the hill and over such part of the camp as was visible from their position. His thin lips curved slightly, and his dark, unsearchable eyes twinkled like very distant stars. Tongue-

less, he made response by pointing upward to a small white cloud above them.

“As a mite in the desert,” explained Hugh. “So are we against the Moslem. So I told you. See yon cloud. Follow it with the eye, boy. It dissolves—now it breaks—and soon it will be quite gone.”

“I care not for numbers,” asserted Richard. “It is the spirit that wins all things. Is it not that which gives men success?”

“Yes,” answered Hugh, promptly, very much pleased. “I myself have vanquished four at a time.”

After breakfast Richard sent Peter for his horse, and, leaving his faithful vassal behind, rode southward among the hills, minded to be alone.

He rode slowly, with the sparkling sea below him, and, entering the forests, soon left the camp behind.

Reaching the top of the hill, he dismounted and picked his way to the left through the wood till at length he came to a point from which he could look down upon the sea.

Here he sat down. He wanted to be apart for a while, to dream and to consecrate himself anew, silently, to the cause for which he was to leave England. He was happy, and his heart swelled within him in high purpose and zeal. He sat with his hands crossed over his knees, with his eyes intent upon the water, but seeing nothing that other men could see. He had set off upon the ground his conical steel cap with its hanging meshes to cover neck and ears, and the wind blew gently in his face and through his hair.

His being was full of song, and there alone he impulsively lifted his young voice in one of the tuneful, swinging war-songs he had known since he was very small. He was gifted with a mellow baritone, clear as a bird note, and he sang with the spirit of youth. One song after another he poured out, his sweet, virile tones ringing in the wood and over the hilltop.

Although he knew it not, he was singing a song that would echo down many and many a century.

His fine voice carried through the wood to the road, where several men on horseback were going north at a walk.

The huge, long-legged, handsome man in the lead reined in as the boy's song came, and listened with a pleased smile.

"A strange Devon bird," he said. He turned to the man nearest him, a thin soldier with the face of an eagle. "Sir Thomas, find me this bird. Disturb it not at all, but see it."

The thin man slipped from his saddle, and, with a stealth natural to him, went into the woods. He returned to the party in the road, bowed to the big man, and mounted his horse.

Without words the men moved off and away, and Richard, all unconscious that a man had stood behind and looked at him searchingly, sang on until, by a sensation unmistakable, he knew it was time to get back to the dining-table.

Arising, he led his horse through the woods. He mounted in the road, and, with

head thrown back, his eyes shining, went back into the Dartmouth camp and to his own company.

“We sail in two days!” cried Willock, meeting him, and his face glowed. “And, boy, the king is in Dartmouth—aye, Richard himself. I saw him—from afar. It was from Halmer I had word of the sailing.”

“In two days!” repeated Richard, joyously, as he leaped to the ground. “Good! I shall be glad when we are on the way. Now, Goodwill,” he exclaimed, touching almost reverently the hilt of his sword, to which he had given this queer name—as some of later days may think it, considering the purpose for which it was designed,—“you shall have work for the glory of the Lord!”

“We will eat now,” said Hugh with a slight grin. He was not surprised that Richard had named his sword, for many warriors of the day christened their blades and spoke of them and addressed them as per-

sons; but, callous and greedy, the boy's zeal amused him. He had no doubt that before many months the young baron would lose much of his idealism.

The news of the near sailing had gone all through the camp, and the Darby men were agog with excitement, even then making preparations to strike camp in a hurry.

After the midday meal Richard and Willock retired to the main pavilion and sat together in the shade, looking down upon the moving, glittering throng, which seemed animated with a great excitement, and talking of the great times to come.

They saw Sir John Halmer and a tall, slight man riding toward their camp. The riders turned from the road without pausing and came slowly toward Richard's tent. Sir John and the other man dismounted, and Richard and Hugh went forward to meet them.

Sir John was jolly as usual, his broad, red face shining, and he hailed the two

friends in very hearty fashion and made known his companion—Sir Thomas Law, a slender man with a hooked nose and a fierce, unblinking eye.

Sir Thomas looked Richard over keenly and curiously as he acknowledged his courteous welcome and the honor of his acquaintance. He turned to Halmer and nodded slightly, glancing at Willock, who saw at once that something out of the ordinary was in this visit.

“Your young friend, Willock,” said jovial Sir John, “was born under a lucky planet.”

“Yes,” responded Hugh, calmly, studying the two visitors.

“If I remember aright, you stated to me, Willock, that this young man would fain look upon his overlord and liege, Richard, the king of England.” Sir John addressed himself to Hugh, but turned his red and smiling face upon the straight, handsome youth.

Richard returned his smile, and felt the

blood leap in his veins. What could this man mean?

“Yes,” returned Hugh. A queer look of pride shone on his scarred, bronzed visage, for, although the age of miracles had passed, as he believed, he caught a glimmer of what might be in this coming of the two knights who served near the king.

“It is queer,” said Halmer, “yet not queer, but His Majesty has a desire to see this young lord from the hills.”

Richard gasped, and stared with parted lips. His cheeks flushed, and his eyes shone with awed joy.

Willock, for his part, compressed his lips, uttered a short laugh, then touched his young friend on the arm in affection.

“The king wishes to see—*me!*” stammered Richard, his voice seeming to him to come from a great distance.

“Yes,” put in Sir Thomas Law in a sharp tone, like the click of steel against steel.

“Yes,” said Halmer in his hearty way. “We bear Richard’s invitation to you,

Baron, to repair to his pavilion immediately."

"Peter!" cried Willock, turning and clapping his hands. "Bring Sir Richard's horse."

"I thank you, gentlemen," said Richard in an uneven voice.

"Go at once," suggested Hugh, touching him on the elbow.

As in a dream, Richard passed into his pavilion, and, scarcely knowing what he did, buckled on Goodwill and set on his ring-mail hood and steel cap, then reappeared before the waiting men.

Peter came at the same moment before the tent with his beautiful bay, and, with staring eyes, stood near by, holding the bridle-rein.

Sir Thomas Law looked the boy over keenly, reluctant admiration in his eye, and, with a nod to Halmer, mounted his charger.

Richard lightly gained his saddle, and, glancing at Hugh, who was watching him gravely, joined the two knights and with

them rode down to the highway and northward among the motley, excited press toward the king's quarters.

The king's pavilion alone on a hill, above the real town, was in plain view as they left the road, the royal banners before it waving in the sunshine, and Richard could see from afar a solitary sitting figure which he knew must be the king himself.

As they approached the tent, Richard, in impulsive devotion, slipped from his horse and, running forward, prostrated himself before his lord.

Richard of Aquitaine and of Anjou, now king of England, smiled slightly, but with a softened eye, as he looked upon the boy baron of Darby. This impulsive reverence to him was not the act of a courtier; it was the genuine obeisance to royalty and to the king's person, and Richard, reading the lad aright, was mightily pleased.

"Stand, sir," he said in his mellow, commanding voice.

And the boy of Darby, obeying instantly,

arose and looked unafraid upon his king, red in his dark cheeks, his eyes alight with devotion. He had heard all his life of this royal prince, whose days had been spent mostly in battle since he was born in Beaumont Castle in Oxford; and now he saw him.

King Richard fulfilled all his expectations, and was even as he had dreamed him.

Richard was now a man in the thirties, not in the best of health then or ever from this time, but vigorous, magnetic, and indomitable. He was tall above the average, great in chest and shoulder, and very straight and shapely. His face was bold and king-like, his head leonine; and his eye could be as soft as a woman's or as hard as steel. His curly hair, cropped close at the forehead, bordered closely on red. His arms were very long, and he possessed physical strength far above that of most men.

As he stood there this day in the April sun, bareheaded, but girt in his glittering hauberk, he was a figure to excite awe and devotion. At his feet lay an axe with a

prodigious steel head, too heavy for most men to wield, but terrible in his mighty grasp. This was a curious weapon then, for it was practically unknown to the warfare of this day in Europe, although he himself used it for years.

“You sing, boy?” said Richard in his quiet way, for with all his fierceness in battle or in anger he was ordinarily gentle of speech, courteous and considerate.

“Sire, yes.”

“Then sing me the song of the Darby sword you were roaring in the hills yesterday when you thought yourself unheard,” said the smiling king.

Richard stared at His Majesty's feet. He was overwhelmed by this startling and unexpected command. It was in his mind to obey, and he tried; but his tongue was as dry as a fallen leaf of autumn, and it was impossible for him to utter a note. He turned alternately hot and cold. A terrible fear flashed through him that he might find himself thus in battle.

Sir John Halmer looked grave, and was uneasy for him, actually squirming; but the thin man with the fierce visage smiled slightly as if he were not displeased at the boy's failure.

The great prince, however, smiled kindly. This dumbness was genuine flattery to him; and while, proud lord as he was, he disliked men to truckle to him, it made him patient.

"Did it not go something like this?" he asked; and with fair accuracy he hummed a strain of the inspiring martial air that had so delighted him on the preceding day.

Richard nodded quickly, and huskily said, "Yes, sire, much so." Then once more he made essay to force music from his nervous throat, but still was unable to command his voice. "I am sorry, Your Majesty," he said, raising his eyes, "but I promise you I shall not so fail you when I hear your command to draw steel—God willing. I am more fit for war than the court."

Richard was still patient, and he had a

genius for winning to himself loyalty of both men and women. Few princes who ever lived had a greater gift of attracting men to his person and holding them faithful. He made no reference further to singing, but tactfully spoke of warfare and drew the lad out, learning much about him.

“Surely, young sir,” he said at length, “you will try again to please me with your song.”

“I would rather serve you, sire, with the sword, but I would serve you zealously according to your desire.” Without waiting for further request,—an eager, simple complaisance that immensely pleased Richard,—he threw back his shoulders, and, with his shining eyes upon the sunny hills, poured forth the pulse-stirring sword-song in a glorious, throbbing voice.

The king looked at him fixedly as the rough song rolled forth, and his face shone with growing great delight.

“Excellent!” he said quickly, when Richard was done, in a tone that made the boy

thrill with joy. "Sing again, boy, if I ask not too much."

So once more Richard sang, now confident, and he sang himself into the king's proud heart and into the scroll of undying romance.

In the end His Majesty graciously praised him, not with stint, but in the royal manner that was one of his fine traits; and Halmer and Law, following his lead, also said pleasant things to him, the former with real pleasure at his success, the latter with tactful ease.

"You may go, gentlemen." Richard nodded to his two knights. "But you, boy—remain. I would have word with you."

Sir John and Law retired at once, and Richard remained at respectful attention before the great king.

"I shall not guerdon you, boy—yet," said Richard.

"Sire," responded the young baron, "you have already given me the gift of your praise. I would have nothing else."



HE Poured forth the pulse-stirring sword song.—*Page 109.*

For a moment Richard frowned slightly, and then his face was rugged and lion-like; but in the next instant he smiled. He knew men, and this boy was speaking from the heart.

“Save one thing,” added Richard, quickly.

The king looked up, an ominous flash in his eye. He was willing to give, for he was free-handed all his life; but he disliked to believe he had erred in judgment.

Richard saw his displeasure, and, although he felt a cold chill run through him, he met his lord’s eye bravely.

“And that one thing, boy? A ring? A sum of money? A command?”

“No, sire,” returned Richard, soberly. “No, sire,—none of those; only that which will please you as much as me.”

“Tell me this thing quickly,” commanded the king with a little puzzled laugh.

“I ask a full pardon and reinstatement for Sir Hubert Grant, of Grantham, who is now declared rebel against your crown, but who is faithful.” In terse phrase Richard told

his story of Sir Hubert, but even before the end he saw his words were unavailing.

“I know him not, boy,” said the king, calmly, but in a way that precluded further words. “If I did meet a man who was once Sir Hubert Grant, up should he go on a gallows forthwith.” Richard’s eyes shot fire, and anger was in his tone. “Ask me, boy, for anything else,” he added, kindly.

“I have no other thing to ask, sire,” returned the boy, shaking his head. He was keenly disappointed, but instinctively knew that he could do nothing, and that Sir Hubert’s fortune was beyond repair.

“Boy,” said the king, “would it please you to be with your king to balm him with your sweet voice? You shall even be at my elbow from this hour. Speak your mind.”

Richard drew his tall form erect, and involuntarily put his hand upon his sword. “Oh, sire,” he cried.

“I would have you willing, sir—not otherwise.”

“ I wish to fight for you, Your Majesty—to be a good soldier.”

“ Yet I ask a great service. And I say that if you can fight as well as you can sing, you shall see fight enough for any man—if you keep by your king’s elbow. Do as your heart bids. I lay no command upon you.”

The king could not have evoked devotion more surely from Richard of Darby. The boy’s eyes filled with tears, and, choking, he dropped upon his knees.

“ Oh, sire!” he said, quaveringly, kissing the royal hand graciously extended by the monarch who truly read and valued this pure fealty, “ I will do even as you wish, gladly and with all my heart till I lay me down in death. Yet, Hugh, dear Hugh Willock, and my men from Darby!”

“ They shall all serve close to the king, boy,” promised Richard, quickly; “ for they must have in some way a touch of thee, and I would have such men near at hand. Aye, Hugh and all the rest shall sail with me. Arise!”

When Richard was on his feet, the king kindly gave him instructions as to the disposition of his following and as to his removal from his present quarters to the royal camp.

After a time the king dismissed his new minstrel, and the young baron, mounting his horse, rode slowly homeward, oblivious of those among whom he passed.

Hugh Willock was both delighted and disappointed with the news; but his delight at length so outweighed disappointment that he was almost as happy as faithful Peter.

Although no one could say who told, the tale of Richard's appointment to the king was known throughout Dartmouth in an hour, spreading as if on the wings of light; and so likewise went among the crusaders the telling of the minstrel's fortune but two days before, which brought the lean old soothsayer such a shower of gold as he had never before seen.

CHAPTER VI

A FEW days after Easter the crusaders in Dartmouth embarked in the waiting vessels and sailed away, and Richard of Devon, with Hugh Willock and his stout seventy from the hills of Darby, remained with the king.

Richard and Hugh sat alone in the hills that day, very silent, watching the sails glimmer in the sun, grow small like flecks of foam in the sparkle of the sea, and then drop below the horizon and disappear.

“They’re gone,” said Richard, very sober, his eyes fixed upon the spot where the last ship had gone from sight.

“And so we also shall soon depart,” returned Hugh, cheerily. “Yonder fleet will gain nothing, except to be continually tossed on the sea while we are on dry land, for it was said—and you have it truly from the king—we shall all meet in Marseilles.”

“That’s so, Hugh, but, even knowing that, it is hard to sit still.”

Willock laughed and arose.

“We would best return,” he said. “As for sitting still,” he went on, “think not that while you serve Richard’s person you will grow fat with tarrying as a sword grows rusty upon the wall. His Majesty is much like his father, Henry, who was so tireless and so active that often he would scorn to sit even for his meals.”

Without response Richard got to his feet and stood beside his stalwart friend.

“It is a great boon to be near our king,” he said, his eyes shining.

“He is a true fighter,” remarked Hugh. “There is no man better. You will be proud to see him in battle.”

Richard breathed deeply, his handsome, deep-tanned face rapt with visions of the winning of glory.

“Yes, it is a boon to be near the king,” said Hugh. He cast a quick look about the hillside to make sure no one had come within

range of their voices. They were quite alone, save for Peter and Hazri, who were several rods distant, tending the horses. "Be careful, boy," he warned. "Mercado and Thomas Law hate you with bitterness."

"I have no fear of them, Hugh. I have not crossed them or done them wrong."

"But that makes no difference," responded Hugh, with a little laugh. "They hate you for the one reason that the king loves you."

"I fear them not at all!" exclaimed Richard, proudly.

"Yet, watch. But let us go. I have work before me to drill those men from Darby, who, I swear, boy, will make your heart glad when they meet the Saracen."

They walked back to their horses, and, mounting, rode down into Dartmouth, Peter and the Oriental following.

After the bustle and stir the town seemed very quiet and lonesome indeed, and the two friends were eager to be off and away.

Their patience was not to be tried by

lingering in Dartmouth, however, for the king was eager and restless. Upon returning to their quarters, which lay near the king's own gorgeous pavilion, with its hangings of crimson silk and gold cloths and its fluttering banners, they met jolly John Halmer, who gave them greeting and told that the king had already given orders to strike camp on the following morning.

Richard and Hugh were overjoyed, but before they left the Devon port the young baron was to taste the bitter part of success, and to see that Willock had spoken wise words of warning on the hill that afternoon.

Now in high favor with the king, Richard ate at the royal table with the officers who served his royal person; and, inexperienced as he was, he could not fail to see that a few of His Majesty's friends jealously resented his presence. No word was spoken against him, no insult was given him, for the king, although not demonstrative in public, had markedly shown a strong attraction for the young noble, and would have brooked no

obvious effort to discredit him; but enmity was present, waiting a chance to strike a blow.

Sir Godfrey Mercado, the man who had swept Grantham, was a sturdy soldier of fifty, stern of face, brave, but corrupt and evil in the ways of the world. He had no personal feeling either for or against the young singer of Devon, but when Richard entered and took his position near the king he favored him with a quick and covert glance.

“The fief of Darby lies near Grantham, young Sir Richard, does it not?” asked the king, suddenly, breaking in upon the subdued conversation of his gentlemen. He turned toward Richard and fixed his eye upon him.

“Yes, sire, immediately next to it.” Richard showed his surprise at this abrupt, strange question, and cast a quick glance about.

Absolute silence reigned at the tables, save for the clink of the silver vessels and knives.

From a tent a few feet away the king's harper thrummed gently on his instrument, the soft melody clear as a bell and sweet as rippling water.

The king took up a morsel of meat in his fingers and ate it, his eyes lowered. There was a little smile on his lips, but no one could note it.

"Sir Godfrey Mercado so stated," he asserted at length, looking up, his face emotionless. "He has quested vainly through the Grantham hills for a certain rebel, and he believes that your men of Darby, who must be familiar with the country, could under his orders bring him success and do a great service to his beloved sovereign."

Richard was glad he had named the man who had suggested this loan of his Darby men; but, while hot anger surged through him and flushed his dark face, he did not guess that Thomas Law had overheard his request to pardon Sir Hubert, and that this was a plan laid to make him rouse the king's terrible anger and cause him to lose his favor,

if not his very head. Neither Law nor Mercado dreamed that the proud young lord of Darby would grant his men for such a service.

“Yes, sire,” said Richard, trembling with a righteous anger. At this moment his devotion to the great king was about to burst like a bubble, for he believed the king, regardless of his feelings or honor, was about to ask an ignoble thing.

“Sir Godfrey,” stated His Majesty, calmly, knowing well that malice against the boy was at work, “may ask you to lend him your good men-at-arms.”

Richard looked boldly at the king. He was no fool, and, although not used to subtleties, realized that the king was in this way making it clear that he himself was not asking and that the idea was not his. He turned to Mercado.

Sir Godfrey met his fiery eye with a cruel, cool smile. The boy was nothing to him. He had made the request to please Law, and because he desired greatly to capture Sir

Hubert himself. His only animus against the Darby baron was that the boy was asking pardon for Sir Hubert and might get it.

“What say you, sir?” he asked across the table in his harsh voice, seeing that the king was not minded to speak further just then. “It will be a true service to my lord the king.”

“I shall be glad to serve the king at any time in any way, Sir Godfrey,” returned Richard, calmly.

“Then I am to understand that your men will serve me as I desire—at your request and the king’s command?”

“Sir, you understand me perfectly,” answered the boy, serenely. He held his head high and smiled into the other’s fierce, weather-beaten visage. He was not disturbed, for he knew his Darby men, and knew that Sir Godfrey would fare no better with them than he had before—not on a hunt for a friend to Darby. “All that I have,” he added, “is at the service of my king, now or at any time.”

“I thank you,” said Mercado, and bent angry eyes down upon the table. He was baffled, defeated, by this green boy who sang like an angel, this boy almost as big as the king, and with a fearless eye; and he did not like it, for the smiles of those about the table were as thongs to his pride.

In the evening under the stars Richard was with the king, and, accompanied by the harp, sang many of the old home songs.

The king thanked him for his words at the table, and in a roundabout way, but plainly enough, promised that Sir Mercado would never lead Darby men into Grantham. He told him, also, that as his monarch’s friend he must be prepared to meet jealousy, and taught him many things he ought to know.

“You have a quick wit, boy,” he said, “and will get along well—even though I have love for you. You are honest, and that is shield and sword—better than all wit and guile. Keep you so.”

“Your Majesty, I have sworn to keep the

faith and to be true and pure. All men do who go upon the crusade."

"Yes," answered the king, "but all do not keep their vows." He shrugged his broad shoulders. He was conscious that he had been cruel and hasty and sinful, but he honored good; he loved the boy for his simplicity, and hoped that he would never grow corrupt. "Now, lad," he said, "go to that stout Hugh Willock who served under my father and tell him that to-morrow we start for London."

Richard bowed low and left the pavilion and returned to his quarters to find Hugh waiting for him.

Through Sir John Halmer, Hugh had learned of the scene at the royal tables, and he complimented Richard on his words and bearing.

"It may have been a scheme," he said, shrewdly, with a round oath. "Some one may have overheard you asking the king's pardon for Grant. I doubt not it was so. Halmer and Law had just left you, you told

me, and perhaps Law did not go too far. He has a keen ear." Hugh threw back his great head and laughed heartily. "But you parried the thrust right well." His face hardened quickly, and his bright eyes flashed, for inwardly he was resolving that if chance offered he would put steel through the vicious, jealous noble who dared to move against his old friend's son.

In the morning King Richard struck camp, and with his officers and personal following, now augmented by Richard of Devon and his men, left the town of Dartmouth and began the memorable return to London.

During this journey Richard was near the king much of the time, and the king made no effort to conceal his growing regard for him.

London was a revelation to Richard, and he marveled at the vast number of people who lived in so small a compass. The magnificence of the court caused him great wonder, too, but, while he comported him-

self easily, he loved the hills and forests and open country more.

The city was bustling with preparations for the king's departure to carry war against the enemies of Christendom; everywhere were swarms of soldiers and nobles from all parts of England. But Richard, so zealous himself, was surprised and disappointed to see that most men plainly looked upon the war as an opportunity to gain power and fortune. Yet he knew Richard, the king, was moved with a religious zeal like his own, and that his heart was truly set upon driving the Moslem host from the sacred city forever.

In June of 1190 all was ready, and the king of England, with his following of lords in their silks and trappings of gold and silver, set off across the straits and landed in Calais.

From that city the king proceeded to Tours, where was assembled a vast gathering of crusaders and pilgrims, and here the king of England formally received from the arch-

bishop his pilgrim's staff and wallet and two banners with gold crosses to carry to Palestine.

Moving on at length from Tours, the great host, glittering in bright armor, gay in silks and with many streaming banners, entered Vézelay, where Richard met Philip of France, to whom he was vassal, making a compact to share equally with him in all their conquests in the Holy War.

The magnificent army now by steady marches went on to Lyons, and there divided to take ship for the East at different ports.

Richard of England, with his minstrel and Willock and other trusted men and many English men-at-arms, including the seventy from Darby, set off for Marseilles, with the expectation of joining his main army on the fleet that had sailed in April from Dartmouth and other ports in England, Brittany, Normandy, and Poitou.

Day by day went by in the southern city, and there was no news of the ships. The king began to get exceedingly impatient, for,

as always, he was eager to be moving toward his desires.

“ I like it little—this delay, and no news,” he said to Richard one sunny day when they stood on the shore of the bay and strained their gaze unavailingly for sails upon the horizon.

“ Perhaps, sire,” responded Richard, “ they have met with severe weather.”

“ Yes,” agreed the king, his brow darkening. “ It may be.”

“ Or they may have put into some port in Spain to give aid against the Moors.”

“ That, too, may be, boy, but we shall tarry but a while longer.” The great king strode moodily back and forth upon the strand, his leonine head thrown back, his eye glittering.

Tired of inaction and waiting, the king soon after this—much to the delight of Richard and all the rest—sent Mercado about to find a suitable vessel to carry him and his personal following on to the East.

Mercado succeeded, after a time, in secur-

ing the galley *Pumbon* for this service, and on the seventh day of August the king, accompanied by Richard, Mercado, Law, Halmer, and Willock and the pick of the men-at-arms, sailed from the harbor of Marseilles and set off for the East.

CHAPTER VII

THE fleet from England and France, after many accidents and adventures, finally joined King Richard; and in September the great array of vessels, a full one hundred and eighty busses and galleys, entered the harbor of Messina in Sicily, while Philip of France and his men and the citizens of the place thronged the shores and all places of vantage, and marveled at the splendor of the great king's coming.

When the fleet had anchored, King Richard, with Richard of Devon, who was now a trusted friend, Mercado, Halmer, and Law, and many others, put off immediately for the shore, and there landed in great pomp.

The two mighty monarchs, Richard and Philip, embraced on the strand, and then amid a great procession went to the cathedral to offer up prayers.

The relations between the two kings, however, were greatly strained, principally because Richard, for various reasons, had broken his royal engagement with Philip's sister, Alois. After an interview following the services in the church, Philip put to sea, but, on account of contrary winds, was obliged to return to Messina that night.

This move on Philip's part gave the English king no concern, for he had a hearty contempt for his ally, which he made no attempt to conceal from Philip himself or from any one else, and, further, he could not help distrust him.

In spite of the impatience he had before manifested, Richard was in no haste to quit Messina, having set out to right the wrongs of Joan, his sister, the former queen of Sicily, who was imprisoned by King Tancred, then king of the island; and he forthwith secured suitable quarters for himself fronting the cathedral square.

Messina was now filled with English and French and men of many nations, and every

hour there was disagreement and brawling among the turbulent throngs. This was unseemly in men who were set out as allies for a common cause, but there was bitterness among all, and it would have required little to make a terrible strife among these fierce men before they even set eyes on Palestine.

“Mercado,” cried Richard, during the first day of his stay in Messina, as he rode into the square before his quarters, “rear me a gallows here.” He pointed directly before the dwelling in which he stayed. “And give it about by our heralds that any man who brawls in the streets, be he French or English or Sicilian, shall hang therefrom within the hour.”

And Mercado, as grim as his grim master, went to work at once, and soon a high gallows stood before the king’s palace.

The turbulent city stood still when Richard’s word was known. Men feared this proud, high-handed prince.

“Who has put up this thing?” asked a fierce, steel-clad soldier of Germany that

afternoon, speaking to a citizen who looked at the structure with eyes of fear.

“Yon Richard of England—the lion-hearted.”

“Aye! You have well named him!” exclaimed the soldier. “The Lamb of France had never dared do this!”

“Have you aught to say against that Richard of the lion heart?” demanded Hugh Willock, who stood near by; and he stepped forward to the first speaker.

“No,” laughed the German, with a nod toward the gallows.

“Pick no quarrel, Hugh,” said Richard, at his elbow.

“Lest I be the first?” queried Hugh, coolly.

Richard laughed slightly. “That was in my mind,” he said. “But to quarrel ill be-seems men who are leagued to fight in the Holy War. Let us go.”

The English king did more than erect his gallows; he took a monastery of the Greeks for a storehouse; and he policed the city and

produced a semblance of order among all; and the designation Lion Heart carelessly bestowed upon him for the first time by one in fear became the name by which he was known thereafter among friend and foe—a name very fitting for a warrior so dashing and intrepid.

“Peace has fallen upon the city, Richard,” said Willock that night. “Let us walk out and about for air and exercise, if it suit you.”

“It suits me very well,” returned Richard. “The king is busy over his plans for engines of war, and will not require me further to-night.”

Buckling on their long swords, the two friends went into the thronged streets and pressed their way about.

It was true that the lion-hearted king had wrought a degree of peace in the city; but, nevertheless, there was among the Sicilians a deep fear and distrust of the English monarch, who they believed designed to possess himself of the entire island. It required but

little to cause serious trouble, and Richard and Hugh noted this as they strolled among the crusaders and citizens.

“There’s a quarrel yonder!” exclaimed Hugh, suddenly, as they entered a small square illuminated with torches bracketed in walls of the buildings.

Across the way, against the wall of a small stone building, stood a Sicilian bread vendor, and before him was a single man-at-arms, whom the two friends could identify as an Englishman by his mail. The Sicilian was crying out in a piercing, passionate utterance, thrusting his hands like talons toward the crusader, who bawled back in contemptuous anger. A crowd of French soldiers and rough citizens was gathering and penning the disputants against the building, and Richard and Willock pressed in with the others, Hugh warning the young baron that they were practically alone among a goodly number of those who hated them.

The bread vendor, whose dark face shone evil with hate in the flaring lights, turned

toward the increasing semicircle before him, and in his shrill voice told that the Englishman had taken his goods and refused payment. An ominous growl went among the throng before the imprisoned vendor and the crusader, and the motley gathering glowered like a pack of wolves upon the stout soldier from the far-away northern island.

“It’s a lie!” roared the crusader with an oath, turning from the vendor. He lost no color or surety of mien, but when he saw dozens of men confronting him, a ring of fierce spirits all seemingly against him, a look of desperation crossed his face, and he backed toward the wall.

Richard, caught with Willock in the press of angry men, looked at the desperate crusader against the wall, and instantly recognized him as Staye, the man who had crept into his tent in Dartmouth to steal his sword.

“It’s a lie!” repeated Staye with another oath. “Are there no English here! Hi!”

A cry went up among the crowd as the

crusader called for his countrymen, and the bread vendor seized the knife in his belt and made a fierce lunge at him.

Staye was too quick for him, however; he leaped aside, and made an effort to draw his sword.

His enemies made this move impossible. With a howl they surged forward and beat the Englishman down before he could strike a blow with his hand.

As he went down under thirty, Willock uttered a great shout, and, drawing his blade, went forward.

Richard drew with Hugh, and followed into the mêlée.

They struck quick and fast with the flat of their swords; and, owing to their quickness and fierceness, succeeded in pushing in to Staye, who, although dazed, leaped to his feet and drew his blade and swept it before him like a flame.

“Make way!” cried Richard, sternly, anxious to prevent further trouble. Men, eager for strife, were now coming into the

square on the run from every quarter, and he wished to work his way out to avoid a general mêlée, which might spread like wild-fire over the whole city. With his drawn blade he went forward, Willock and Staye following.

They left the square without trouble, although the men who had listened to the dispute had drawn their blades and stood eager for fight, but momentarily undecided.

Among those who entered the square as Richard and the other two were making their escape were many English, and as the trio reached the end of the square and slipped into a street leading toward the cathedral they could hear the clash of steel and the fierce shouting of the crowd in the square.

"This means trouble, Hugh," said Richard. "They've started a fight that will be hard to stop. It may spread."

Hugh nodded grimly, and now sheathed his sword.

Staye touched Richard lightly on the elbow.

“I remember you, sir,” he said as the other turned toward him.

“And I do you, rascal. Many men may die for your villainy. You had best go.”

Staye grinned, and, thinking the advice good, slipped among the crowd through which they were passing and disappeared.

“You know that villain?” queried Hugh.

“Yes,” answered Richard, and told the midnight adventure in Dartmouth.

Hugh laughed, but made no comment.

When they reached the palace, Richard immediately sought the king and related what had occurred.

“The word of trouble has already reached me, Richard,” said the lion-hearted crusader. “You would do well to get your horse ready. You shall not sing to-night, but you may hear music, for I shall hold Messina in my grasp before daylight.”

In five minutes Richard of England, with the boy Richard, Hugh, and Mercado, and all his personal following, was in the streets.

The English trumpets sounded through

the city in every quarter, and the lion-hearted king of England, sudden as a falcon in descent, went through the streets like a storm, sweeping everything before him, and, as he said, took Messina in one attack “quicker than any priest could say matins.”

The taking of the city had been accomplished with comparatively little fighting. The Sicilians had been paralyzed with fright, and the French and most of the other foreign crusaders had lifted no hand either against or for Richard.

In the morning Richard's royal banner floated proudly from the walls of the conquered city. King Philip was exceedingly angry at this, although he had made no move to aid, and Cœur de Lion, wroth as he was at his sullen and wavering ally, later in the day took down his standard in the cause of peace and amity, making the city over to the Hospitalers and Templars to hold till his demands upon King Tancred should be met.

Peace of a certain kind, therefore, was made in Messina among all factions,—the

natives, the French and the English, and the swarms of Germans and Italians; and during this quiet preparations were made for the departure to Palestine.

King Philip, still bitter against Richard, sailed from Sicily first to aid the armies already before the walls of the city of Acre.

For some time longer the king of England remained in Messina, enforcing his demands upon Tancred, building stone-throwers and other engines of war and keeping peace among his uneasy, turbulent host with a high hand and lion-hearted courage; but at length all affairs were settled in Sicily, and then Richard, with his host, put out from the harbor, and, skirting the shores, as was the custom among mariners in these days, made his way toward Palestine to join his fellow-crusaders before Acre.

CHAPTER VIII

FLASHING in the sunlight, clear-cut against the blue of the cloudless sky, the great walls and towers of Acre rose out of the sea before the eyes of the English fleet. Southward among the palms lay the vast encampment of the beleaguering Christian armies, almost to Mount Carmel ten miles away, while beyond the crusaders rested Saladin with unnumbered hosts, girding the Europeans and holding them between the city and the sea, waiting for an opportunity to relieve the six thousand within the walls. It was a sight such as no man ever saw before or since. As far as the eye could see, the plains and hills were thickly dotted with the tents and pavilions of Christian and Moslem, each camp and gorgeous pavilion marked with the banner of captain and king; and for miles the country swarmed with the glittering hosts of warriors.

The English sailed into the harbor at noon, under a grilling, pitiless sun, and along the strand thousands of Christians stood and greeted Richard of the lion heart with shouts of joy that echoed like thunder and carried consternation to Saladin, who saw that now he could never render aid to Acre. The waiting crusaders were delirious with their happiness, and hailed and received Richard as the saviour of their cause.

That night was spent in feasting and revelry; petty jealousies were obscured for the time; all men mixed together; and one spirit of accord was in the mighty encampment.

Acre, which had withstood siege for two years, looked down from its walls and desperately prepared for continued defense. The Turk in battle had no superior, and the brave men in the city had no intention of yielding even to the great king of England until Saladin gave the word.

Young Richard and Willock on that first night, when jubilation and good will were in

all men of the Christian armies, moved about together, leaving Peter and Hazri in their own quarters.

“What think you of my words in Dartmouth as to numbers, Richard?” asked Hugh.

“I perceive that much may be that seems impossible,” returned Richard with a frank laugh.

“See yonder.” Willock pointed southward to Mount Carmel and toward the vast camp of the Saracens. “There are the infidels—in number like the sands of the shore. Though we hem Acre to the sea, yet Saladin as truly holds us before Acre.”

Naturally staid, Richard, although joyous at the thought that nothing could stand before this grand crusading army, had no desire to mingle much with those who reveled; for he preferred to look upon the massive walls upon the landward side of the city and to examine the stone-throwers, or ballistæ, the rams and scaling-ladders and the raw-hide shelters designed to protect the engi-

neers from Greek fire thrown from the walls.

Shortly before the arrival of Cœur de Lion, Philip of France had led an assault upon Acre, but with no favorable result to the Christians. Across the wide, deep fosse before the grim walls Richard could see the strength of the defense against which the Europeans had thrown their stones and their columns of men with little avail.

“This city will never be taken by storm,” declared Hugh; and he pointed out to the younger man the reasons why he believed the place impregnable. “You will doubtless see, boy,” he said, “more than one valorous assault, but all will be useless unless our engines can batter a fair breach in those walls.”

Although there was rejoicing all through the camps of the allies, yet before the wall, looming gigantic in the starlight, many of the crusaders were among their pits and movable shields discharging their crossbows whenever a man showed on the walls against

the soft purple sky. Besides this fringe of bowmen, the engineers were at the ballistæ, and Richard for the first time saw these stone-throwers in action. The creaking of wood and jangle of chains sounded ceaselessly along the fosse, accompanied by the thud of the great projectiles against the city walls.

All this was exceedingly fascinating to the young baron, and he asked countless questions, both of Willock and of the men along the moat among whom they made their way.

At a late hour they started to retrace their steps to their quarters, and the talking and singing of thousands of happy, confident warriors came in the calm tropical night, and rose and fell in waves like the whisper of a most mighty wind gathering impetus in unbound reaches.

Hugh halted after they had advanced a few rods and looked back toward Acre, his scarred visage grim in the starlight. Richard also stopped and gazed at the beleaguered stronghold so stubbornly held.

“Ah,” said Hugh in a matter-of-fact way, but with a flash of the eye, “there is much wealth within those walls.”

“Yes,—for our lord, the king,” agreed Richard in a tone of rebuke.

“Aye—for the *lion-hearted*,” observed the big man, with a covert look at the boy. He smiled slightly, his lips curving grimly, and a man less preoccupied than Richard would have known he meant wealth was to be had by *any* man who was lion-hearted. And Hugh Willock did mean just that. He was loyal to the king; but, like most men of his day, looked upon looting as legitimate, and felt restraining orders to be utmost tyranny. “There, boy,” he said, changing the subject, “see yon tower.” He pointed to a square tower in the southeastern part of the besieged city, rising clear-cut against the sky.

“Yes.”

“That is the ‘Accursed Tower’ of which you have heard men speak, being so called because the story has it that it was built with the money that cursed Judas had from the

priests.” Hugh pointed out the other towers, the dome of the great mosque, and many other buildings visible from their position, for, having been in Acre, he knew the place well. “It’s within that mosque,” he began, then abruptly broke his speech and spoke of something else.

“I fear you think of gold too much,” said Richard, who now understood Willock thoroughly. He himself had little desire for worldly gain; but, in spite of his zeal for the cause, he was too broad-minded to deem Willock reprobate. In truth, he had long before seen that very many men, even those who had taken the Cross, even princes themselves, were come not unmindful of the material spoils of war; and he could not feel hardly toward his rough, brave, and loyal friend because he was as most men.

“I’m minded to prove that old soothsayer a liar, Richard,” responded Hugh, with his jovial laugh.

“It is unlikely,” said the boy, “that his words of you were untrue and of me true.

I wish you fortune, yet I place service to our lord above all the gold in the world."

Hugh shook his head. He knew the chivalrous, high-minded minstrel really meant this, meant it literally; and he honored him for it, although he could not feel the same way.

It was very late now, and over the land amidst the great hosts and countless tents glimmered thousands of lights like earth stars. From far and near the Christian heralds stood forth in their respective camps, and their trumpets echoed over the plains in a weird martial harmony. The silvery blare and rippling echoes died away; and then the heralds, each at the top of his voice, cried out three times, "Aid us, Holy Sepulchre!" A profound silence came among the thousands of the faith of the Cross, and then, suddenly, in answer the whole vast army raised its cry in unison, "Aid us, Holy Sepulchre!" in a thunder that seemed to roll upward to the glittering stars.

Richard gasped in awe, and Willock also

felt the blood tingle in his veins. Then they both uplifted their hands and made the same invocation.

“Richard,” said Hugh, as soon as the spell of that sublime adjuration had left them, “I would have speech of most confidential nature between us before we draw steel side by side, as soon, I trust, will be.”

“I have always been frank with you, dear Hugh.”

“Yes, lad, yes,” answered the stalwart soldier. “You have been. But I have something I must say. You remember that the old soothsayer who read you of your fortune said he saw in me secret purpose.”

“I remember he said you were a true man,” returned Richard, stoutly, with a smile.

Hugh slightly flushed, and he placed his hand affectionately on his elbow. “He read the truth. I did have a secret purpose, and now I would make it open to you. Come, let us find a place where no chance ear may—rob us.”

Richard nodded, and followed his friend, his face grave, his eyes a bit troubled. Hugh selected an open spot near the beach, and they sat down together.

“I was in Acre four years ago,” said Willock at once, “and while there learned of a great treasure buried in the inner court of the mosque, both gold and jewels. This wealth came from a Saracen caravan that was overtaken near Jaffa, and the two who gained it refused to yield it up to the Grand Master of the Templars—and they died the death. One of them was a friend of mine, and he bequeathed all the treasure to me. Unable to seize my bequest, I came away. Your father, Richard, was to come on with me, and we were to share alike. This hidden treasure is the purpose I have kept secret, and now your father’s half shall be yours. If I should die, all shall go into your coffers, for I have in my wallet a sure direction to the spot where my legacy awaits us.”

Richard was silent for a while. He was not angry, but indifferent toward gain for

himself. He believed Hugh's story absolutely, but to his mind the treasure belonged to the king. Breaking the silence, he so stated to Willock.

"No, it is mine," said Hugh, calmly, refusing to let anger come to his breast.

"There shall be no quarrel between us, Hugh," returned Richard. "I will make compact with you to recover the treasure. I will give mine up; you shall keep yours, though I doubt not it will work you only harm."

"That's a fair bargain, boy," exclaimed Hugh, delighted that Richard should make no trouble because of scruples. In his heart he hoped that the baron would overcome his foolish feelings and keep his one-half; but, at any rate, he knew he would be true and allow him to profit according to his word.

Leaving their isolated position, they strode through the outlying camps to find their own pavilion southward among a grove of palms not far from the seashore. They passed group after group of exultant cru-

saders, who were circled about singers or tale-tellers, until finally they came to a stretch of rocky land bare of tents and piled with various stores, principally mounds of rocks brought on ships for the ballistæ. This was a deserted spot, save for an occasional cross-bowman sauntering idly among the goods, singing to himself or watching the lazy combers of the flood-tide roll in from afar and curl and foamingly break upon the strand.

As they skirted the beach, talking of the probability of an assault upon the city in the very near future, and of the disposition of forces and engines they thought wise, several shadows moved with them several rods from the shore and kept them company until they had left the camps some distance behind.

When the two friends, quite unconscious of the shadows following, turned the bend and lost the glimmer of lights behind, and, in fact, all sight of the vast camp except the distant tents on an elevation, the shadows detached themselves from the cover of the

slight rise above the beach—one, two, three, four, seven—and came running down the sand with their swords drawn and shimmering in the starlight.

One man was far in advance, as if he had started the rush or were fleeing from the others, and he sped on at topmost speed.

“By the Cross!” exclaimed Willock, who had caught sight of the men when they broke cover. “This is an attack,” he added, with a fierce oath; and on the instant he whipped out his great blade and faced about for action. “Draw, Richard! You shall have good practice for that sword-arm of yours, and a chance to show these robbers what Willock has taught you.”

Like Hugh, Richard had seen the men as they shot out from the gloom, and with his deceptive deliberation—for his movements were really like lightning—drew his common sword—for Goodwill he had vowed to draw first only against the infidel—and set himself.

The first man reached the friends well be-

fore the others, and, halting, dropped his sword-point.

Richard gazed hard in amazement, for again Staye, the thieving soldier, had crossed his way. Fire flashed from his eyes, and but for the lowered blade he would have slain the rascal.

“Quick, Sir Richard!” exclaimed the fierce-visaged villain. “They come to kill you here. They are Frenchmen. I was to lead them to this, and we have followed you long.”

“He would gain time!” cried Willock, and his terrible blade whirled up and flashed.

“Not so!” shouted Staye, springing back. “I come to stand with you, Sir Richard.”

“Then,” said Richard, curtly, “prove it quick. Turn!”

Staye, knowing the six were now within a few feet, wheeled upon the word and met his rushing former companions with a clash of steel.

Richard and Hugh stood back to back, and made ready, Willock laughing softly.

Staye was not lying to play them treacherously to death, for they saw him valiantly stand the first shock, and, with a plunge, thrust his blade through a breastplate and slay the first man like a sheep.

The two nobles calmly moved a pace from each other and allowed the soldier to form one side of a triangle.

The five remaining men were desperate rascals, skilled with the sword and with all to lose and much to gain. Except for Staye's defection, it was clear that the two friends would have been unable to escape.

The party of assassins, still silent, encircled the stalwart trio, and, as Willock taunted them contemptuously, they suddenly closed in with a ferocious rush. The sword-blades rasped and rang, and the trio, standing firm, held them off.

Richard bore the brunt of this assault, for the five centered their attack upon him as much as possible, desperately trying to force in to cut him from the others.

Willock justified the reputation he had

throughout the war-camps of Europe, and he fought with incredible fury, his huge blade whirling and flashing like the sword of an avenging angel. With all his activity and skill, however, he did not strike down a man, but merely held them off and defended himself and Richard as if he were waiting for something.

Staye, the London soldier, was no mean swordsman. He stood by Richard's side, and more than once struck aside a mighty blow from the assailants, giving more heed to the protection of the minstrel than to his own person. He was waiting for nothing, however, and he fought with a fire and valor that brought him a roar of praise from Hugh.

But stalwart and brave as were these three, they were in utmost peril, for the assassins were men worthy of their steel, and while they pressed with ferocious spirit they did not court death in foolish fashion. For several moments the eight men fought in a whirling mass, with a clash of steel and the sound of hard breathing.

As they swayed here and there in the sand, Richard slipped, and one of the assassins, quick as thought, thrust his sword down between his legs to throw him utterly, while a big man at his side uplifted his blade with a cry and made ready to strike as the minstrel lost his balance.

With a roar of warning Staye leaped forward, and, with a sweeping, backward blow, beheaded the man with the upraised sword. Richard went prone at the moment, and Staye, under a rain of blows, stood over him till he gained his knees.

“Quick, my lord!” gasped the brave rascal. “Quick! They have me!” As he spoke, he made a last desperate effort, and drove his steel cleanly through the breast of the man who had lowered his blade to trip the boy.

With a thunderous cry Willock sprang forward. The truth was that while he had fought actively he had held his hand from actual slaying till need came, for he deemed this sudden assault of desperate odds fine

schooling for the lad he loved, and he desired him to have a heavy share of honor in victory—if victory came. But now, seeing Richard on his knees and Staye crumbling like wax under a dozen vicious blows, he swept upon the assassins like a tiger. His sword went up and down and clove through steel mesh like cheese. Having slain the third man, he faced the other and with a roar engaged him, in a short time shearing him from shoulder to waist.

Richard leaped to his feet and opposed the last man. With drawn sword Hugh stood still, and with his fierce face set in a grim smile watched the lad. He offered neither advice nor encouragement, but coolly waited and stood ready to aid if Richard failed to vanquish his opponent.

The young minstrel had found a foe not wholly unworthy of his steel; but, young and strong and tall beyond the average, as well as sublimely confident, he soon had victory in his grasp and knew that he could deal a decisive blow. Pity was a rare quality in

these days, even among the nobles; but Richard of Devon, although a fighter to his last day, had a quality of mercy that made him tender of heart.

“An assassin!” cried Hugh, disgustedly, seeing that Richard was master, and guessing at the feeling of pity in his breast.

Richard hardened his heart, and, moreover, at Hugh’s cry his adversary made a desperate effort to close in and win with the impetuosity of his attack; so, sidestepping nimbly, he struck mightily and crashed through the fellow’s steel cap, shearing down into his hauberk and sending him prone to the sand among the others.

“It was well done, but tardily,” commented Hugh, coolly. “Mercy is for the court of justice.”

“Mercy is for everywhere,” returned Richard, and then his kind heart thought of the rascal Staye. Cleaning his sword and sheathing it, he kneeled among the dead and dying ruffians, and, finding the thief, lifted his head and held it.

Staye was still alive, although dying from many wounds, and when he saw the young noble holding him his eyes cleared and a bright light of surprise and gratitude shone in them.

“You saved our lives, Staye,” said the minstrel.

“Water!” gasped the rascal.

“No water here,” returned Willock, who stood looking down without emotion of any kind. “You are a valiant man-at-arms,” he added. “I would you were one of mine, but you are done and dying.”

Staye grinned feebly, even in death pleased at the big man’s compliment. His eyes softened as he looked up into the handsome face of the king’s young companion who had been kind to him.

“They would kill you, Sir Richard,” he whispered. “’Tis Mercado.”

“What does he say?” asked Hugh.

Richard raised his hand for silence.

“I was caught at—at my old tricks in the French camp—stealing,” went on Staye,

with a rustling of the breath, “and Mercado saw me. He saved me, saved me on condition that I seek you and stop your singing—forever. These others were Frenchmen who were hired to come with me. Good soldiers, too, for we expected to find you together. ’Twas Mercado. Be careful! He will slay thee—for some hate I know not of.” The dying thief closed his eyes and breathed hard, and Richard felt his body grow limp under his arm. Staye suddenly opened his eyes wide, and quite clear, and looked at the boy with a look of devotion. “Water!” he whispered.

Richard shook his head with a pitying eye.

“You saved my life, Staye, and redeemed yourself,” he said. “I thank you, for myself and in the king’s name.”

Staye smiled, and then closed his eyes, gave a little shudder, and crossed the unknown gulf between the living and the dead.

Richard arose and glanced about with hardening face upon the slain assassins.

“It was a plot, Hugh,” he declared, and told what Staye had asserted.

“Mercado’s reason is plain,” said Hugh at length. “He fears that through you his stealing of taxes will come to light, and, also, Law, the jealous, prods him. Best tell His Majesty and cross swords with Mercado.”

“No,” returned Richard. “There is no time for petty and personal quarrels. I will let it all pass till a better time. The king has enough to worry him without my trouble. And, besides, we should not bicker while on this common cause.”

“But *watch*,” put in Hugh, dryly, “for he will try again.”

“Let us go.” Richard turned, and together they passed down the strand and after some difficulty succeeded in coming to their own quarters.

CHAPTER IX

GREAT preparations went forward for one concerted, grand assault upon the besieged city. Bridges for the fosse were made, scaling-ladders were fashioned to be placed against the walls, and more stone-throwers were built. The armies looked to their cross-bows and spears, sharpened sword and dagger, and furbished shield and helmet and hauberk. Every heart in the camp beat high with hope.

Richard of the Lion Heart was the animating spirit in the host; he superintended the building of the new ballistæ, and was everywhere, filling men with zeal.

Day after day, and each night, the crusaders discharged huge stones at the walls of the city. Cœur de Lion promised first one gold piece, then two, for every stone taken from Acre's rampart. Here and there the ceaseless pounding from the catapults went

on, and the Accursed Tower was battered and cast down.

If the same first zeal and zealous coöperation had remained among the Christian armies, very likely the siege of Acre would have been ended much sooner than it was, and probably in a different way; but Richard and Philip, each now hating the other, could not work in common. And, more than this, the Christian host was composed of men from every country in Europe, there being present on the plains of Acre more than fifteen kings and many nobles, each jealous of his place and honor. Each high personage had a private end in view; so, even before Richard of England could strike a single blow, the splendid gathering of Europe's finest warriors began to draw apart from one another in anger and jealousy, and to disintegrate and weaken as a fighting unit.

Cœur de Lion could see this, but, great as he was, magnetic as he was, he could not control the situation. He worked on ceaselessly, however, with Richard of Devon at

his elbow, an intelligent, tireless helper, whose zeal and hope never flagged nor drooped.

“I am unwell,” said the king one night, after returning from an inspection of the catapults. “I am weak in the knees and faint.”

“You have worked too hard, sire,” returned the minstrel, “and have worry on your mind.”

The king, whose health was somewhat broken even before he left England, did indeed look ill. His great handsome face was haggard and flushed, and he refused his supper this night and lay down in his pavilion.

Richard was alarmed, for he saw His Majesty was really more than tired and worried.

Late in the evening Cœur de Lion complained of fever and seemed to be in a serious condition, with much the symptoms of blood poisoning.

“You may call in the leeches, Richard,” he said at length. The young baron had

before pressed him to have the physicians, but until then the king had refused to see them.

The doctors came forthwith at Richard's orders, and did what they could for the royal patient. They were somewhat mystified at his complaint, however, and were unable to arrest his high fever.

The king was no better in the morning, but, indeed, worse; and Richard, under his orders, rode to the fosse with Hugh and Sir John Halmer to represent him.

Day after day went by now, and Cœur de Lion was still in his bed, unable to lift his sword. He was in peril of his life. It was impossible to keep from the armies the fact that the leading spirit of the crusade was very ill, and a gloom fell over all the encampment.

This was a dark hour for Richard of Devon, who loved the lion-hearted king both as a monarch and as a man; but he tried to keep his spirits up as best he could. Zealously he served the king, staying almost all

the time at his bedside, telling him of the camp and of the progress being made in the preparations for the storming of the city. He sang to him and related the stories he had learned in his Devon home, cheered him and waited upon him, and proved a friend such as great men seldom have.

After a time the leeches decided that Richard of England was ill of a disease they called Arnoldia, a wasting fever; but they could do little save hope.

During all this period Peter, of course, served his master, Richard, as faithfully as Richard himself served the king; and Hugh Willock saw the young minstrel every night to acquaint him with the news of the camp.

On the night when Cœur de Lion lay most ill, Willock came as usual to see Richard.

“The assault is to be to-morrow,” he announced.

“To-morrow!” Richard was incredulous.

“I have it straight. Philip fears we wait too long, and will move. I tell you in order that you can be with me and your men.”

“Do we English move without Richard?”

“Of a surety. Between us, boy,” said Hugh in a low tone, “I think Philip is not ill pleased that the lord of England—whom he hates—lies abed. He would take all the glory to himself.”

Richard shook his head. “I may not leave him—the king. I will not.”

“You need not fear for your honor, boy,” returned Willock with a grin, “for I tell you Acre will not yet be taken by assault. You must know that besides the assaulting we must look to our rear yonder, for Saladin waits to come upon us at the trenches there like a sand-storm.”

“Yet, Hugh, this is treachery to move while our lord is unable to direct.”

“No,” said Hugh, promptly. “Delay is ill now, for men are beginning to tire of waiting. Still, as I say, I think Philip would take all the glory. I prophesy he shall have but small measure.”

Hugh’s news proved to be quite true, and on the following day the Christians made

ready to storm the city once more under the leadership of the king of France.

Cœur de Lion lay on his couch helpless, but he knew that the army was about to make the assault without him. Bitter as it was to lie helpless at this time, he urged his officers, through Richard, to fight with the rest without jealousy or friction.

Richard was well-nigh beside himself. In spite of Hugh Willock's words, he believed that Acre could not possibly withstand the assault, for he could not conceive of any human power that could stand before the mighty host of which he was one; and, of course, he was wild to be with Hugh and his own men-at-arms from Darby. His first duty was to serve the king's person, however, and he steeled himself to the great disappointment.

Cœur de Lion called him to his couch, and, obeying, the young baron knelt before him. Although low and but half-conscious, the king knew the unrest and desire in the boy's heart.

“When does Philip move?” he asked.

“In the morning, sire.”

One of the three physicians in the pavilion cautioned His Majesty not to excite himself.

“Do you wish to go, boy?” he asked, in his labored whispering. He smiled slightly, and paid no attention to the doctor’s words.

“Yes, sire, but I will stay here.”

Richard the king slightly moved his head. He closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, somewhat of his usual spirit flashed forth.

“Yes, boy,” he said, “you will stay here, but you can go out now and then and tell me how the assault goes.”

Shortly after this the English king sank very low, indeed so low that Richard and all the attendants feared for him exceedingly.

The camp was comparatively quiet that night, although, as usual, the heralds blew their trumpets and cried out, “Aid! Aid for the Holy Sepulchre!”

Dawn came—the blazing sun rose in a

copper sky. The whole Christian army, thousands and thousands of men in glittering mail, all save Guy de Lusignan's force far to the south, placed there to check a rear attack from the Moslems, moved across the plains and spread out before the land walls of the city—a wondrous, gorgeous scene of military glory. A hundred brazen trumpets blared in the hot, cloudless morning, and the hosts crossed the bridges over the fosse, and, shouting, dashed like a wave against the massive walls of Acre. The catapults clanked regularly, and hurled their huge missiles over the walls into the city. A great fringe of cross-bowmen skirted the fosse and darkened the air with their bolts shot at the defenders now thick upon the wall. Hundreds and hundreds of fierce swordsmen pushed up to the walls, and, under a shower of stones and arrows and the unquenchable Greek fire, placed their ladders against the stones, and, in a struggling mass, made a heroic effort to gain a foothold on the ramparts.

The Saracens of Acre, however, had not

been surprised by the assault, for their watchers had told of the movement in the Christian army,—if, indeed, they had not learned of the intended assault from their spies; and when the crusaders' trumpets blew they swarmed to the walls, and, regardless of the hail of bolts from the bowmen, desperately resisted the fierce scalers and put to naught all efforts to gain the top in force.

Ladder after ladder was hurled from the walls by the ferocious Turk, and hundreds of the crusaders lay dead and dying below the grim walls. At length down went the last ladder, and, amidst great shouts from the men on the walls, all the scaling crusaders who were able retreated to the fosse.

The assault had failed, failed utterly, and, heavy of heart, the Christians left the walls of the city and returned to the vast camp.

Joy reigned that night in Acre and in Saladin's camp, where word of the repulse had speedily gone by carrier pigeon and then by spy. After the coming of Richard, hailed by the Christians as the deliverer and

dreaded by his foes from the first, this repulse was a very great triumph for the Moslem; and Saladin in the hills was planning for the time when he should come down upon the plains with his tribesmen from all Arabia and sweep away the Christian invaders like a flood.

If joy reigned in Acre and in Saladin's tents in the hills beyond the brook of Kishon, the opposite feeling was in the crusaders' camp. Philip was angry, ashamed, and he sulked. One faction blamed another for this and that. Petty bickerings took place, and all the smouldering jealousies of kings and princes and captains burst forth anew. Everybody was angered and cast down, and gloom was over the plain.

During the gallant but futile assault, Richard of Devon had ridden out to the fosse upon the king's command and had twice carried news of the fight, at the end bearing news of the failure.

His heart thrilled with fierce joy that day when he saw the heroic efforts of his fellow-

crusaders to scale the walls, and he longed to be with them. His own Darby bowmen were stationed near a ballista under Willock, and he was proud to see them. He was glad they were not among the scaling parties, for even his inexperienced eye could foresee the result.

King Richard was somewhat better that noon, and when the boy returned, after seeing the last ladder go down with its load of men squirming under the terrible Greek fire and shower of rocks, he read the news in his face, and, struggling to an elbow, fixed his fever-gleaming eyes upon him.

“You bring bad news, boy,” he exclaimed.

“Your Majesty!” remonstrated the chief leech. “Nay, he brings no bad news.”

Cœur de Lion laughed even in his pain, and kept his eyes upon the minstrel who so faithfully tended him.

“Richard!” he said imperiously questioningly.

“The assault has failed, sire,” returned Richard, simply. He would have evaded the

truth if such a course would do good; but he knew the king would learn the truth very soon, and, indeed, probably knew then; and, moreover, he would not lie outright for any man.

The king could not restrain a grim smile at this report which meant Philip's discomfiture. Philip had taken advantage of his illness to try to win Acre alone; but, whatever Richard's faults, he first desired success for the cause, and was accordingly disappointed. He realized, too, that this failure would put new heart into the Moslems hemming the Christians in before the city walls.

For many days after the repulse of Philip's assault, the crusaders remained gloomily before the stubborn city. Each night the heralds of the armies blew their trumpets and cried out, "Aid! Aid for the Holy Sepulchre!" And the kings and captains, torn and riven by their pride and jealousies, tried in vain to re-create the spirit of unity and zeal with which the camp had been inspired upon Cœur de Lion's arrival.

Although the crusaders made no other great assault upon Acre, yet always the ballistæ were at work battering upon the walls. Bowmen stationed by the fosse ceaselessly shot their bolts at such defenders as appeared in sight. Every day some gallant band tried by quickness or stealth to win to the top of the rampart, but always the watchful Saracens repulsed them. Twice, in fact, two or three bold spirits gained the top of the walls, there to be put to the sword and thrown to the ground.

To make matters more dark, King Philip took to his bed, sick of the same peculiar malady that kept Cœur de Lion in his pavilion. Others of the camp fell ill likewise, and the great Count of Flanders was carried away by the disease.

Richard of England, however, began to recover, and as soon as he could sit up he caused his pavilion to be moved to a hillock near the fosse from which he could overlook the stone-throwers and direct them, as well as superintend the construction of new ones.

He was near enough to the walls to employ the cross-bow, with which he was very skillful, and young Richard, who was constantly with him, strung the bow for him and notched his bolt when he desired.

Not all this time was spent in warlike talk and work. The king and the minstrel talked of many things besides, and Richard touched the harp and sang daily. Together they composed songs, as seriously and with as much pleasure as if they were secure in England.

They worked long upon one ballad in particular, and before the walls of Acre wrote the music and composed the words of the entire piece.

“ ‘Love’ does not rhyme with ‘rove,’ sire,” said Richard, while they were at work upon the ballad.

“ No,” agreed the king, readily. “ But we cannot have ‘love’ twice so near together, boy. We cannot repeat it.”

“ Say ‘dove,’ then, sire,” suggested Richard, and he changed the line upon which they

were engaged so that it ended with "dove," without impairing the meaning.

The whole ballad was done at last, and every day, in fact several times a day, Richard sang it. Now and then the great king himself, this mighty warrior who loved music, joined his voice with the boy's. The song was soon known to them by heart, but neither king nor minstrel could guess that it was to be of the utmost importance to them and their country in a few months.

The time now came when Cœur de Lion was able to stand like himself and put on his armor. When he appeared on the plain—a huge figure in his glittering steel—the Christian army, although sadly rent by dissension, took new heart.

Philip of France was still very ill, but Richard made preparations for another assault upon Acre, having no doubt he could win to the walls. He had learned from spies that the city was about ready to yield, that it could hold out but a short time longer, and he expected victory. He was not to

have the joy and glory of taking it by storm, however, for on the very day he had decided to make his assault, Saladin, knowing the gloom of the Christians, came down from the hills and threw his host upon Guy de Lusignan, the throneless king of Jerusalem, who was stationed at the south of the plain of Acre.

De Lusignan and his men fought like heroes, but, before the myriads of infidels, were swept speedily back upon their companions in arms.

The Christian army was ready, fortunately, and, with Cœur de Lion at its head, formed and met Saladin in a terrific battle. Here on the plain of Acre the two hosts—thousands and thousands of men, on foot and on horseback—met in a furious hurly-burly under the burning sun of Palestine.

Right well that day did the English king deserve the name “Lion Heart.” With his enormous battle-axe swinging, he flailed through the pressing Orientals, his own knights close following, and cast fear and



HE FLAILED THROUGH THE PRESSING ORIENTALS.—*Page 180.*

doubt into Saladin's bosom. He seemed to be everywhere; his huge figure, clad in glittering steel from head to foot, on his favorite black horse, led many a charge; and his voice rose above all others and gave new strength and courage to the crusaders. Wherever he rode among the Moslems with his doughty knights, there he left death behind. No man could stand before him, and the fierce infidels looked upon him as one more than mortal.

All through that great battle, Richard of Devon, with Goodwill flashing in the sunlight, fought by the side of his mighty lord. Waves of dark men, with sword and spear, brave and fierce as tigers, swept up and about him, but always the lion-hearted king and his minstrel and knights came safely through, although now and then one of the number went down amidst the struggling horde, never to rise.

Backward and forward over the plains the great, glittering, fighting hosts swarmed, and the shouting of Christian and infidel, the cries of the wounded and the dying, and the

ceaseless clashing of steel sounded like the roar of a tempest at sea.

Young Richard of Devon rode dauntless through this terrible scene, firmly seated on his bay, wielding Goodwill with exceeding skill and powerful arm. Here the king's battle-axe rose and fell; there flashed Richard's great sword. Richard was cool enough, though his heart thrilled. His eye was keen and sure, and every minute he kept watch upon the king at his side, to be ready to save him, and many a time his long blade struck aside a sword or a scimitar thrust at the Lion Hearted by some infidel who sacrificed himself to make that one effort to cut down the English king.

The sun was slipping into the sea before the battle was decided, its long, last blood-red rays striking across the plain like gigantic javelins; and then, of a sudden, the host of Saladin gave up the contest, and, struck with the spirit of panic, turned and fled toward the hills like a retreating wave.

All through the Christian army went up

a fiercely triumphant shout, and like another wave the crusaders drove the Moslems back and beyond the Kishon and pursued them even to the hills with great slaughter.

When Saladin turned in rout, Cœur de Lion drew rein with his men on the field thick with the dying and the slain, and, with shining face, turned to Richard and the other gentlemen.

“The Lord has favored us and given victory,” he said. He uplifted his face reverently and gave thanks. He shook his head sadly as he looked over the bloody plain and saw the cost of victory. “Boy,” he said to Richard, “you fight as well as you sing. I thank you for many a stroke this day.”

Glowing with supreme pleasure, Richard bowed his head before the king. To be praised by the greatest lord of Christendom on the battlefield! Joyous pride surged in his heart, and at this moment he was the happiest, proudest lad alive in the whole world.

Cœur de Lion thanked all in his courteous,

hearty way,—the way that made warriors love him.

Among the king's immediate following there had been loss, of course; and Richard, although not glad, felt some relief to know that Mercado could plot against him no more. Early in the day that valiant soldier, for he was as brave a man as ever drew steel, went down among a press of the infidels.

Sir John Halmer, too, was missing, and late in the night his body was brought in from the plain.

Hugh Willock and the Darby men had fought all the day near Richard of Devon, and, as all were in steel armor, there were but three missing. Hugh, who had performed wonderful feats of strength and skill, was without a scratch; and when he met Richard he made no effort to conceal his joy in finding him alive and unhurt. He praised the young baron, too, and his words were as pleasing to Richard as the king's.

At dark the crusaders returned to camp, and a spirit of jubilation and good will was

once more among them. Their joyous songs rang out in the star-gemmed night hour after hour, and here and there the trumpets pealed triumphantly, while the voices of the heralds came clear above song and trumpet in words of praise and thanks.

“Now,” said Hugh that night, as he reclined with Richard near their pavilion, “Acre will surrender. We have driven Saladin back and broken his hope of succoring the city. Doubtless now he has sent the word to yield.”

“So declared His Majesty,” returned Richard, drowsily. Although the spirit of great joy was in him in this victory which meant so much for the Cross, yet he was almost played out, and found it hard to keep awake. In fact, he was so worn and weary that soon he fell fast asleep. Hugh winked at Peter, who was near by, and then, with a smile at his young friend, lay on his elbow musing, with his eyes longingly fixed upon the city clear in the starlight.

Hugh was not mistaken about the effect

of Saladin's utter rout on the plains of Acre. On the following day envoys came to Cœur de Lion and the Christian leaders and sought for terms. Acre was fallen. The crusaders made terms of surrender as they desired, terms exceedingly favorable to themselves, and hard but not dishonorable to the infidels.

At the appointed hour the gates of the city were thrown open, and all except the hostages departed therefrom free, but with naught save the clothes they wore. After evacuation, the crusaders, singing joyously, their jubilant trumpets sounding, marched into the stronghold which had cost thirty thousand Christian lives, and flung their victorious banners to the sunlight and the breath of the sea.

Richard of England quartered himself in the royal palace, and the French king stationed himself in the house of the Templars.

But in this time of triumph ill-feeling again manifested itself among the factions composing the crusading army, and Richard

and Philip began to bicker over the division of spoils.

Leopold of Austria, a proud noble, thought himself at liberty to place his ducal banner upon the walls of Acre with those of the great kings, but, to his intense mortification and rage, his standard was broken and his ensign hurled outside the walls. He was furious. He attributed this to the proud, imperious king of England, and hated him with a terrible hate. He felt that he could do nothing to revenge himself, however, against so powerful an enemy, and so, arranging his affairs, he took ship and left Acre for home.

Little was noted of Leopold. Richard did not know why he had gone. There was plenty to engage his attention, for ill-feeling had grown hot among the armies. Acre seethed with discontent, and only his energy and fearlessness and tact prevented a general outbreak.

CHAPTER X

THE dwelling wherein Richard of Devon, with Hugh Willock and the Darby men, was quartered, lay near the sea-wall of the city, and one sunny afternoon not long after the crusaders had entered Acre the young baron and Hugh were together in a chamber looking out across the dazzling, peaceful bay.

Hugh Willock lay stretched in the broad stone window-ledge in the shade, where the cooling breeze from the water could strike upon his brown, scarred visage; while Richard, within the apartment, rested his stalwart frame in a curious cushioned chair, with side-rests, a chair such as he had never seen before.

“The duke of Austria has quitted the city,” observed Hugh at length, with a grimace of contempt. “His delicate feelings were hurt when his banner fell from the wall.”

“He blames it to us, Hugh, yet I think no English hand cast it down.”

“I know not,” returned Hugh, carelessly. “I like these German kind very little, and, as you know, they all hate our lord for what they call his meddling in Sicily and elsewhere.”

“I regret to see such ill-feeling among our men,” said Richard, gravely. “I’m not an old soldier, Hugh, as you are, but I know it is bad for an army to be so torn with jealousies.”

“It is so,” agreed the other, “and I have heard, too, that Philip”—he uttered the name with great contempt—“has told our lord that he desires to return home.”

Richard struck the side-rest of his chair sharply. His handsome face flushed, and his eyes shot fire.

“He will do no such thing, after his vow to carry this crusade on with the English.”

Hugh nodded with his grim smile.

“I think he will, boy. He has not recovered from his fever, and it leaks out that

he thinks he was poisoned. You will see that our lord will release him from his vow."

Richard sat upright and stared at Hugh, who did not move his huge frame at all; but he made no further comment.

"It is even so, Richard," went on Willock. "He would withdraw. He is ill, and has had word that his son is unwell."

"This will mean more glory, then, for our king and English steel."

"Yes," agreed Hugh with a little laugh. "Yes, you shall have plenty of chance, boy, to wield Goodwill. I have no doubt we should be as well off now if every French dog should leave us." He cast a quick look about to make sure that neither Hazri nor Peter was in the apartment, and that nobody was under the wall. "But," he added, "I have in mind at this moment another subject."

"You are still thinking of the treasure of which you spoke to me?"

"Aye, boy. I have thought over the matter much, and have even been in the court-

yard of the mosque, although I could do little, because the place was crowded."

Richard was honest enough to show his interest. It must be confessed that he now saw the lure of gold, although his ideals were still true. There was nothing surprising in this change of viewpoint. Hugh Willock was not the only man concerned for gain. Everybody talked of gold and wealth—men-at-arms and knights and princes. He could see that even Cœur de Lion was not slow in taking full share of the captives and treasures of Acre. And yet, while Richard realized that more men toiled and marched and fought for gold than for the glory of the Cross, he still had no desire for treasure for himself.

Hugh perceived that the boy looked upon the treasure quest in a different way. He made no comment upon it, but he threw back his head and uttered his jolly laugh, which made the minstrel flush.

"I am interested now," said Richard, understanding Hugh's amusement.

“I would not have you change your ideals—much—for great treasure,” put in Hugh, quickly, his face sober and strangely softened as he looked at the lad he loved like a son. “There is much in the world besides gold, Richard,” he went on, “and yet, think—he must first have who would give. The beggar gives no alms; he takes them. Nay, I would have you as you are—kind and true. The riches of a fine spirit never grow less, but multiply with the giving. Still, gold helps to make the mind easy, and one can be more kind and inspiring with the mind at rest.”

“You are becoming much of a preacher, Hugh,” laughed Richard, greatly amused at the rough soldier’s jumble of words, but not scornful.

A red suffused the stalwart swordsman’s bronzed cheeks. Hugh laughed again in his hearty way, and sat upright in the window, his broad shoulders outlined against the shimmering sea.

“I think it will be dangerous, lad,” he

said, "to try to gain our treasure now, for all our men swarm everywhere. If we were seen, I doubt not we should have some trouble."

"I have spoken to His Majesty about this affair," responded Richard.

"Aye," exclaimed Hugh in a sharp tone, his face hardening. It had not been in his mind to let the king know of the hidden treasure. He saw Cœur de Lion in a different way than Richard, and believed he would not scruple to take all that came within his power.

"And," continued the young baron, not failing to see Hugh's look, "he accords us permission to do as we will in the matter."

"You did not tell him where the treasure lies, or that I held the secret?"

"I told him nothing save that there was a treasure."

"Good!" The big man arose and paced back and forth, with lowered brow. He stopped abruptly before Richard. "We

would do well to move quickly—even to-night. Does His Majesty require you?”

“I shall have no difficulty in getting leave. He is too busy now to think of songs or verse-making.”

“Then to-night we’ll go to the mosque, though it will be risky, for there may be many in the cool of the inner court. But we must take the chance. I’ll pick out three good rascals of the Darby men, and we’ll trust to fortune.”

Richard arose, and the two gripped hands, smiling into each other’s eyes.

As the young baron had stated, Cœur de Lion was little disposed to spend the evening idly. Many duties claimed him. After the evening meal, however, which was served in the gardens of the palace under a gorgeous silken canopy amid the palms, with the fountains plashing about the tables, the great king sat for a while at leisure, while Richard of Devon, standing under the glittering stars in the serene sky, sang the song they had

composed together in the shelter on the mound before the city.

Richard, the king, was delighted. He was a man who threw himself whole-heartedly into the thing engaging him; and, although harassed by many problems, he gave himself up to amusement for a few minutes. He was greatly pleased with the lad from Darby; he loved him, and, also, he highly respected him for his conduct in the furious battle on the plains.

“That song will live, Richard,” he declared with quiet enthusiasm, while those about in the royal gardens applauded spontaneously when the manly, mellow voice of the minstrel had died away on the last note. “I would that your voice could live to sing it thus to those who know of us in after times.”

Richard flushed, as he always flushed at his lord's praise, but he could not forbear a little smile at the idea of equality in authorship implied in the king's wish.

Cœur de Lion laughed. He was keen and

exceedingly quick, and he noted and understood the minstrel's smile.

"It's true enough, boy," he said, "that most of the song is yours, yet am I proud to say that I laid therein a few words. I did not praise to praise myself, as your disloyal smile would charge."

"Sire," began Richard, as the officers began to smile at him in a hard way.

The king laughed again, frankly.

"You are not made for a court, boy; you are too honest," he said dryly, his proud eye glancing about the men and ladies in the gardens. "You are too honest to give me unearned and undue praise. That last verse once more, Sir Richard, and then you may go where you will till the morrow."

Again Richard opened his lips, unafraid, and lifted his strong, pure voice in the song now most favored by the king.

When he was done, he bowed before His Majesty as was his wont.

The lion-hearted king smiled down at him and touched him on the shoulder.

“You shall be more than a singer of songs one day, lad,” he said. “I watch your mind. I say some day you shall be a counselor with your lord, mayhap.”

Thrilling at these words, Richard took the king’s extended hand and reverently kissed it. Save God and the right, there was no equal to the king of England.

“I thank you, sire,” he said, with a little tremor in his voice. “I want nothing on earth save to serve you.”

“And I thank thee,” returned Richard in a low tone, for he knew that this brave, stalwart young lord of Devon still spoke from the heart with pure fealty. “Now go, lad; go to thy dear love—old Hugh Willock.”

Richard arose and, bowing, left the gardens, speaking with his accustomed frank and cordial words to those who addressed him.

At the appointed hour he met Hugh in the court of his dwelling by the sea-wall. Hugh was patiently awaiting him, seated on

a stone bench, leaning with hands crossed on his sword-hilt, gazing at the heavens. He was clad in his coat of steel mesh, covered with his white tunic with its red cross on the breast, and his conical steel cap was on the stone beside him.

“Our rascals await us,” said Hugh after greeting him, and he named the three men he had selected for the night adventure.

Richard signified his satisfaction with the other’s choice, and then he told Hugh of the king’s kind words.

“We shall not move together long,” was Willock’s quiet comment. He was joyed to see that his beloved young friend was to gain position and honors, but his stern heart sickened as he thought of the days when they would be separated.

Richard took his hand, and, with shining eyes, looked at his friend’s scarred, unmoved visage.

“You shall prosper where I prosper, Hugh,” said he, earnestly.

“I want nothing but to see you go to

honor," exclaimed Hugh, roughly. "I court neither position nor honor—I am too old and too rough. All I want is a bit of land—and peace. But—let us go."

Side by side they left the inner court and joined the three stout Darby retainers who were waiting, armed at Willock's command with crossbows as well as swords.

Peter came inopportunately out as they called the men to them.

"I go with you, sir," he said in a matter-of-fact way. "I fear to take the air alone."

"You fear nothing," laughed Richard,—
"not even to speak impudence to your master. You may sit in my chamber near the window and watch the stars wink."

"Nay," returned the faithful Peter, boldly. "I must walk."

"Come along, then."

Peter smiled broadly with great delight. He loved his young lord, and was exceedingly jealous of Hugh Willock, even though the old soldier was a knight. He desired nothing better than the chance to do him a

great service, to show his love by dying for him if need arose.

The party of six forthwith moved out into the streets and set off toward the great mosque, Richard and Hugh leading.

Richard of England ruled in Acre imperiously and as a conqueror; but, for all he could do, the city thronged with turbulent streams of men of the various princes and kings and nobles. Upon entry into Acre, the crusaders, uncontrollable after hardship and battle and restraint, gave themselves over to revelry hardly in keeping with their vows, and the city was in a ferment. Brawls were frequent in the streets and squares, and no single man was safe amid the press of boisterous men of all the nations of Europe.

Richard and Willock, however, pressed their way on, and avoided trouble, which might come from insult or too great cordiality, and stopped nowhere.

The great mosque of Acre was of white stone, built four square around a spacious court. The court was shaded with huge

palms about all sides, as well as in the center over the garden and the little stone inclosure of the well. It was laid with squares of different-colored stones, set in a regular pattern, and about the sides ran a platform about a foot high. Many doors gave ingress to the mosque on all quarters.

Richard and Hugh and Peter and the three Darby men-at-arms entered this court from the street and sauntered about. It was very cool and comfortable under the palms and stars—and quiet; the nightingales were calling; the fountains gently plashed and gurgled; and from a distance sounded the strains of a harp splendidly played. Acre had, as always, been terribly hot during the day, and this quiet place, after passage through the crowded streets, was like a bit of Paradise. Occasionally they saw a vague form flitting on the stone platform among the pillars and arches; but, except for these figures, the place was deserted.

Hugh Willock had little eye for the beauty of the court; he was impatient. He

wiped his hand across his sweaty face and cast his keen glance about. With his eyes upon the tessellated pavement, he strode down the court, halting suddenly. Placing his foot on a black stone, he paced along the edge of the platform, and then came to a halt again and tapped a white stone with the tip of his great sword.

“Take this up,” he ordered, curtly.

Two of the Darby men kneeled at once, and with short, heavy knives worked about the stone to loosen it.

“Make haste, dogs,” said Hugh, “if you would keep steel from your gullets. Two gold pieces for each of you if we get what we are here for.” He turned to Richard, his scar drawn tight and showing livid in the starlight. “If any come, boy,” he whispered, grimly, “we stand.”

Richard nodded, his face also grim. He felt the fascination of treasure-hunting now, and, like Hugh, he had no mind to delay the quest or to leave like sheep if others came to dispute their right.

The two men-at-arms worked hard and fast, while the rest of the group stood nearby, glancing about the court among the palms.

The diggers at length loosened the square of marble and turned it upon the pavement with a clink.

"Now, dig!" commanded Hugh, leaning over, his fierce face glowing with eagerness.

With their stout knives the fellows dug in the earth under the upturned square.

"Somebody's coming!" whispered Peter.

"Dig!" ordered Willock, savagely, standing upright and glaring down the court.

From the other end of the inclosure near the street entrance came the sound of coarse laughter, the shuffle of feet, and the clink-clank and jangle of steel. It was evident that a body of unruly soldiers had come from the street, although, as the palms and gardens in the center intervened, Richard and Hugh could not see them.

The two diggers continued their work

without looking up. They feared Hugh more than a clash in which he would be on their side.

“I strike something hard, sir,” announced one of them, excitedly.

Hugh pushed the speaker aside, took the knife from his hand, and himself began to dig, his fierce eyes glittering.

“Ah!” he exclaimed aloud; and as he spoke he drew a small box from the hole and gained his feet. “Replace the dirt and block, you lazy dogs.” He held the box out triumphantly toward Richard.

As the Darby men obeyed his orders, and with their hands scooped the earth back into the cavity, a number of men came about the garden at the end of the court. The intruders, all glittering in steel caps and shirts of mesh, halted abruptly, then called out in French. At their shout other men came into view and joined them.

“At least twenty,” said Hugh Willock, coolly, “and not in their right senses—and French. The saints only know how many

are just outside.” He slipped the casket under his loose tunic, but its bulk showed plainly.

The two Darby men replaced the marble square and arose, stolid, but bringing their swords forward.

Richard glanced at the many doors in the side of the mosque, but they were all closed. He saw in an instant that the hesitating men down the court were suspicious of them, and he knew it would be impossible for Hugh and himself and his Darby men to pass safely the way they had come. To run about the garden to gain the street gate was foolish, because some of the men would think of the gate and guard it, and, further, because, as Hugh said, it was impossible to tell how many might be in the street just outside the entrance.

“We must go over the wall,” he said. “Sam”—he nodded toward one of his vassals, a tall broad man—“can give us his back. Dick and Peter can go up first, and with their crossbows stand off a rush. You

and I and Hedon can follow, and we'll draw Sam after us."

"Yes," agreed Hugh. "That will give us time to make away in the street down at the end. It is well thought."

They had delayed too long, quick as their decision had been, for even as Hugh spoke four men issued from the gardens directly opposite them and staggeringly approached. They were rough, fierce-looking fellows, with sweating, flushed faces, and, while laughing, were in a mood to make trouble.

"You've been digging," said the foremost in broken English, his keen eyes having noted the earth on the pavement.

"You see things," returned Hugh, contemptuously.

"Digging," repeated the soldier. He stared at Hugh, and suddenly noted the betraying bulge of his tunic. His eyes widened and glowed, and his jaw sagged.

His three companions observed Hugh's burden at the same time, and they stared at

him queerly and instinctively fumbled at their great hilts.

“What you got?” demanded the first soldier, speaking in French, as he lurched forward toward the great Englishman.

His three friends also approached the little knot of English, their inflamed faces savage; and the men at the end of the court were now coming forward. There was no time to be lost.

Hugh Willock was not a man to hesitate when he thought time for action had come. As the persistent questioner came within reach, he dashed his free hand in the fellow's face and sent him sprawling. With a cry to Richard, he turned and ran toward the end of the court.

Richard and Peter and the three men-at-arms followed at his heels.

When Hugh struck the too-inquisitive crusader, the other three Frenchmen whipped out their blades, and, cursing, followed the fleeting party. One of them shouted out the French battle-cry.

“The English have found gold!” roared another, beckoning to the men down the court.

The crowd of soldiers whom Richard and Hugh had first seen answered this call in a fierce, jumbling roar, and with a great clattering came running down the pavement.

Hugh gained the wall first, and turned as his party joined him.

Sam, the big man, drew out his sword and then bent his back for a way to the top of the wall, and his two comrades and Richard unsheathed their blades and stood before him in a living wall to hold off the first pursuers.

“You go up, Peter,” commanded Richard, “and stand on the top of the wall with your bow.”

Peter clambered to Sam’s broad shoulders and managed to gain the top of the wall. When there, he unslung his bow and notched a bolt.

Bedlam was now loose in the court. The party of soldiers came rushing on with flashing swords, shouting their battle-cry. Be-

yond the walls came the sound of other men taking up the cry, until it seemed as if the city were aroused.

Hugh withdrew the casket from beneath his tunic and pressed it upon Richard.

“You go next,” he said, and, as Richard took the box, he drew his monstrous sword and took his place. “Stand back!” he roared to the wild press of men who were nearing the wall. “The man on the wall will shoot the first.”

Sheathing Goodwill, Richard gained Sam’s back. He placed the casket on the wall and then nimbly joined Peter. He had hated to leave Hugh’s side, but delay would have been fatal.

The French crusaders, lustful for gold and fierce with hatred of the men with whom they had fought side by side, hemmed in the group by the wall, but halted at a few paces when Hugh fiercely bade them stand.

“Go you next,” said Willock to the Darby man on the right, and that stout fellow willingly enough turned to Sam’s ready back

and climbed to the wall, when there stringing his bow and making ready to aid Peter.

The howling Frenchmen pressed closer, but still hesitated before Hugh's sword and the menace of the crossbows on the wall.

"Now, you!" snapped Willock to the other man, and then he stood alone in the court before Sam.

The second man-at-arms gained the wall and reinforced the others with his bow.

"Hurry! Hurry, Hugh!" cried Richard. "There are others coming in the court."

"And I see some turning into the street below us," bawled the fellow who had just reached the top of the wall.

"Make way for me," responded Hugh, calmly. On the instant of speaking he slipped his sword into its scabbard, turned, and, leaping upon Sam's back, scrambled to the wall with the agility of a tiger cat.

Sam was now left alone, backed against the wall with the infuriated Frenchmen pressing in upon him with gleaming swords.

He drew his burly form erect and faced them with his great blade.

“Shoot at the first thrust!” ordered Hugh, savagely. “*Now*, boy!” He dropped upon his stomach upon the wall, Richard immediately doing likewise by his side, both stretching down with their hands to grasp Sam when he turned and leaped. “Up with you!” roared Hugh, suddenly. “*Now!*”

Sam sheathed his sword coolly, knowing well he would not be deserted, then turned and leaped upward without a second’s hesitation, counting upon aid.

The crowd pushed in to get this last man, and then Peter and the other two men with bows fired at the foremost, their deadly bolts finding marks and momentarily halting the swordsmen. That pause, slight as it was, saved Sam. As he shot into the air, Richard and Hugh grasped his wrists and with desperate haste drew him to the top, just as the men below leaped over their fallen comrades to cut him down in mid-air.

“Very entertaining,” commented Hugh,

coolly, grinning down at the upturned furious faces, and he took possession of the little box which had well-nigh cost all their lives.

“We had best be seeking entertainment elsewhere,” responded Richard just as coolly. “There are men below us in the street. Let us go.”

“Right, boy.”

Without further words the six adventurers dropped from the wall into the street, like over-ripe plums from a tree.

There was an uproar to the east of the mosque and in the court. The French battle-cry was ringing out, accompanied by shouts from the court to guide those outside in the search for the pursued.

The street in which Richard and Hugh found themselves was comparatively deserted, however, although men were now turning the corner to look for them, not knowing the cause of trouble, but merely that certain Englishmen were fleeing from their own comrades-at-arms.

They had no desire to engage in any un-

necessary brawl, and, with their men following, fled under cover of the buildings and kept on till they had outdistanced their pursuers.

Dropping into a walk at length, they passed into the square and merged themselves with the throngs passing to and fro. All pursuit was now ended, and, keeping together, they made their way leisurely to Richard's comfortable dwelling by the sea-wall.

In the court Hugh Willock, in high good humor, made good his word to the men-at-arms and paid them, and, moreover, he gave Peter a gold piece and a word of praise.

The two friends went up at once to the chamber looking out to sea, and Hugh, with some difficulty, opened the chest, his fierce face and eyes glistening with anticipation.

The old crusader had not been deceived, for the box contained a fair treasure in gold and precious stones, and he was delighted beyond measure.

"By the Cross!" he exclaimed. "My

share will make me rich, and I'll buy land near you, Richard, and leave war."

"The crusade is not yet over."

"No," said Hugh.

"And you are not safe in England."

"No," agreed Hugh again. "But croak not, lad," he cried with a laugh. "It is not like you." He turned out upon the table the coins and gems, and with deliberation and great fairness made two piles, until he had made the division upon which they had agreed. He constantly referred to Richard for opinion in making this division, but Richard always smilingly told him to do as he listed. "This pile is yours, Richard," he said, pointing to one of the glittering piles.

Richard shook his head.

"No—the king's."

"Aye, then the king's." Hugh looked at him soberly, and his words came haltingly.

"And His Majesty," said Richard with a smile, "directed me to give his share to one Hugh Willock, a dear friend of mine."

Hugh stared at him, his jaw dropped, and

a blank expression crept over his seamed, bronzed visage, to change suddenly to one of extreme delight. The red blood flamed in his sun-tanned face, and his deep-set eyes glowed.

“You do not jest!”

Richard shook his head, delighted at Hugh’s surprise.

“I do not jest. The king gives it to you.”

“Nay!” cried Hugh. “*You* give it!” He stared at the treasure as if entranced by it. Suddenly he swept it all into the casket, and stood looking at the young baron with a look of uncertainty, yet with a curiously softened face. “Would you love me the more, Richard, if I gave every last jewel and gold piece to the Cross?”

Richard arose, his eyes shining, and put out his hand.

“I could not love you more, Sir Hugh,” he returned, “but I would have you keep it all to buy lands in Devon.”

“And yet you would not be angry were

I to yield it all to our lord, Richard of the Lion Heart? Somehow, boy, you make old Hugh Willock feel that to do the good thing is the best course,—that there is no rest else.”

“Then, Sir Hugh, you have not journeyed to Palestine in vain,” returned Richard, soberly.

Hugh laughed and shook his great shoulders.

“No,” said the boy. “I do not wish you to yield a single piece to Cross or king. It is yours. So Richard himself decreed.”

The two friends clasped hands in a steel-like grip of affection and understanding, and said no more about the treasure. And yet that very night Willock sought the king and tendered him the whole of the treasure taken from the courtyard of the mosque. The Lion-Hearted refused the offering, so, with a clear conscience, Hugh called the casket and its contents his own.

CHAPTER XI

PLEADING illness of himself and his son and the pressure of home affairs, Philip of France embarked from Acre, abandoning the crusade and leaving to fight in his name three hundred knights and a thousand foot-soldiers.

Cœur de Lion made no strong effort to hold his faint-hearted ally to their common vow, and he bade him farewell without regret, merely exacting from him the promise that he “would not wittingly or wilfully do any harm against his men and lands so long as he continued in his pilgrimage.” Knowing Philip well, he realized that by remaining in the East he was hazarding his crown in the west, for he believed the French king might join with his brother, John, against him; but he truly thought then that it would be a comparatively easy matter for him to push south and win the Holy City.

Immediately after the departure of the

French, Richard made preparations to leave Acre and begin the march toward Jerusalem.

When the march at length began, and the crusaders moved southward along the coast, he learned something of the hazards and difficulties that lay before him. The infidels, superbly mounted and unencumbered with armor of iron, were seemingly without number. They were brave and persistent, and from the first mile from Acre they constantly harassed the flanks of the Christian army. The heat of day was well-nigh unbearable to the men from the west, in their steel breastplates and padded coats, and fevers and winged and crawling pests of various kinds made their trials indescribable.

Then came the battle of Arsuf, the rebuilding of Ascalon, which Saladin had dismantled, the siege of Darum, and the heroic relief of Jaffa.

The crusaders left their dead along the shore in hundreds, but, with incredible bravery and endurance, pressed on and on, fighting all the time.

All through this march, through battle and siege, sand-storm and fever, in victory and defeat, Richard of England, whatever his faults, loomed as a heroic leader, undismayed, ever cheerful, ever brave, ever the lion-hearted, giving enthusiasm and always leading.

But all these trials and endeavors of a heroic body, whose great deeds will never die, were unavailing; the climate, the pests, the scorching sun, were against them; and yet the great king of England pressed Saladin so closely as to make the Moslem cold with the fear of defeat, although for months the two kings, each admiring the other, exchanged many courtesies. Saladin, hard pressed as he was, could not restrain his admiration for the Lion-Hearted, and, indeed, declared that if he were to lose his kingdom he would rather lose it to Richard than to any other prince he had ever seen.

Internal dissensions were still rife among the crusaders, and it is no wonder Richard's heart at length grew weary of the whole

campaign. To make matters worse, at Furbia envoys from England came to Richard with letters from his mother, telling of intrigues between his perfidious brother, John, and King Philip. Richard was torn with doubt. England called him, and yet in the end he decided to remain in Palestine and try still to wring victory from adverse fortune.

At this time he began to lean not a little upon Richard of Devon, who, through all trials and battles, had been at his side, always ready, firm, cheerful, and dauntless.

And yet, in spite of all, Cœur de Lion came one day within sight of the desired city—Jerusalem.

One night the scouts brought news of a Saracen caravan traveling east a few miles from the Christian camp, and Cœur de Lion, with Richard, Hugh Willock, and other knights and part of the Darby men, left their ground and succeeded in waylaying the Moslems and defeating them after a sharp struggle.

This little victory, which cost the Turks about twenty men, gave the king a number of camels and mules and horses, as well as provisions and garments; and, moreover, among the men made prisoners was Saladin's own herald.

Sending the caravan back toward camp under guard, Richard and his fighting minstrel and other personal followers pushed on rapidly among the hills in pursuit of those who had escaped. The infidels, however, eluded them.

Morning, bright and clear and scorching hot, found the king upon the summit of Nebi Samwil, from which a great expanse lies before the eyes. Here Richard of England, alone save for his handful of men, had to halt.

"Sire," cried Hugh Willock, stepping near and bowing low, "if you will but come forward I will show you the wall of the Holy City in the sun afar off."

The king bent his head, his eyes misty.

"Nay!" he cried. "I will not look.

Heaven! let me not put my eyes upon the city I cannot deliver from thine enemies!"

He turned abruptly away.

Hugh touched Richard of Devon on the elbow, and led him, with shining, rapturous eyes, along the mountain-top and pointed toward the horizon.

"There, boy," he said. "Look! There stands Jerusalem! You can see her walls glisten like steel."

Richard strained his gaze east, and saw the glint of the walls of the far-off city.

"I see!" he said in a low tone. "I see." Dropping his head, he turned and rejoined his lord.

"Even as the old soothsayer in Dartmouth said," muttered Hugh to himself awesomely. "He has seen—but I think he shall never enter there." He was sad for the boy, but he was thinking also of his gold. If all the soothsayer's prophecies held true, little would his treasure avail him.

Further battles and delays followed, as all the accounts tell, but the time came when



"NAY! I WILL NOT LOOK."—Page 221.

infidel and Christian alike welcomed a truce for several years. When the treaty, which allowed Christians to make pilgrimages to the Holy City, was signed, Richard of England, sick of heart and of body, turned back toward Acre, refusing to go to Jerusalem.

In private the king made no concealment of his anxiety over the news from England, and it was his intention to sail from Acre as soon as he was able.

“I shall have hot, quick work for you, boy,” he told Richard, to whom he spoke always in great frankness. “I shall squeeze brother John!” He held out his mighty hand and clenched it, while his face darkened in a way that boded ill for his treacherous representative. “And then,” he went on, “I shall press Philip of France. It will not be difficult. John is a coward, and Philip is a fool and a coward to boot. Have you made such preparations for leaving here as I have directed?”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” returned Richard. “Many of your men have already sailed.”

“We shall leave in a few days,” said the king, sitting upright on the divan set in a window overlooking the shady, spacious palace gardens.

“You are strong enough to travel, sire?”

“Aye, strong enough to travel,” returned the king with a flashing eye; “strong enough to go southward again if I had all English—and time.”

“The treaty would forbid,” put in Richard with his boyish smile.

“Treaty!” Cœur de Lion turned upon his stalwart minstrel. “Treaties can be broken—like twigs.”

“But not yours, sire.”

Richard of the Lion Heart scowled for a moment; then his face cleared and he laughed.

“You are very jealous of our royal honor, boy.”

“Your Majesty speaks truly—I am,” said Richard, simply, and he bore the king’s eye for a moment and then respectfully inclined his head.

“If all had been as jealous of it—and as valiant and uncomplaining—as you,” growled the great warrior, with contained passion, “our camp would this very night be in Jerusalem!” He turned away and fixed his fierce, glowing eyes outside in the general direction of that city which he had been unable to deliver—the greatest dream of his stormy life.

Preparations for the embarkation of the English crusaders were now pushed rapidly on. One ship after another sailed from Acre on the long and perilous voyage to England. The king’s wife and sister left Palestine before Richard, and then came the time when the Lion-Hearted himself was to sail.

When the last body of soldiers had gone, Richard set sail from the shores of Palestine in a single vessel, accompanied only by Richard of Devon, Willock, and others of his personal following.

On the bright morning of departure the great king sat alone under his awning, his

arms folded upon his enormous chest, his eyes set upon the dimming shores of that land where he had won undying fame—and failed.

Richard and Hugh Willock were much together in the little ship, and Willock was openly delighted to have his young companion at his elbow again.

“I mistrust the sea, boy,” growled Hugh, glancing about over the glimmering waters, his eyes squinting in the dazzling sun. Unmoved by any dangers of land or battle, the fierce old crusader upon the water was as nervous as a cat.

“I love it,” returned Richard, for the smell of the sea was dear to him, even from earliest childhood.

“I like not this going back and forth to suit every puff of wind,” complained Hugh, whose way it was to go straight toward his object.

Richard laughed heartily at his friend’s querulous words, and Hugh laughed also, for he knew well enough the necessity for

tacking, or, as he said, "going back and forth to suit every puff of wind."

The voyage proved tiresome and trying to all on board, for head-winds and storms fought and baffled them from the first day out from Acre; and a whole month was spent in beating up the Mediterranean. At the end of this time Richard turned from his course, his vessel seeming to him unseaworthy, and put into Corfu, where the entire ship's company joyfully set foot on solid earth.

"I shall sail not a rood farther in that ship," declared the king to Richard and his knights when they had landed. He turned to his minstrel. "Seek you suitable vessels to carry us to Ragusa and Zara."

"Your Majesty mayhap designs to journey homeward by land," put in Willock. He had never been in the king's council, but in astonishment he spoke boldly, surprise showing in his bronzed, scarred visage.

"Yes," returned Cœur de Lion, curtly, bending his gaze upon the stalwart veteran.

“ Sir Hugh Willock thinks of the dangers of it to Your Majesty’s very person,” put in Sir Baldwin, one of the king’s most loyal knights. “ And, sire, I think him in the right; I have counseled against this plan. Men accuse you of the murder of Conrad of Tyre, and his kinsfolk are bitter against you. Men accuse you, too, of taking gifts from Saladin, and—playing false.”

The king turned his eyes darkly upon Sir Baldwin, but the knight went on fearlessly.

“ You must pass, sire, through the lands of many of your enemies. Henry of Germany, believing in his right to Sicily, holds grudge against you for your aid to Tancred; Leopold is powerful, and hates you; and near home you must venture within the grasp of Philip, who is now in league with your unworthy brother.”

“ Enough!” said Richard, sharply. “ I know that many would like to compass my ruin and death, but we shall pass safely home in disguise as pilgrims, and no man shall know that the king of England is come till

I front the perfidious son of my father.” The king drew his massive form erect, and fire flashed from his eyes. Impatience and bitterness ran in his blood; the thought of the failure of his great venture and of treachery from many friends burned in him; and he longed to set foot in his island kingdom and enter London sword in hand.

“Richard,” he cried, turning to his faithful young singer, “secure me, as I have said, suitable vessels for all who would go north by land with their lord. I see your dear love, Willock, would not be of us—though I honor his sword.” The king had never liked Hugh, and, mighty king as he was, he was rather jealous of him because of Richard’s friendship.

“You wrong me, sire,” exclaimed Hugh, boldly and earnestly. “No man can serve you more truly than I have done—and will. I go with you. I cannot bear the sea.”

The king laughed. “Then,” said he, “go with my boy and aid him in securing vessels.”

After giving Richard further instructions,

Cœur de Lion turned to Baldwin to discuss the matter of disguises for all who were to journey overland.

Richard and Hugh, accompanied by three men-at-arms, set off along the shores of Corfu to buy or charter a vessel to take the king to Ragusa. It was no easy task to find suitable carriers for the party. Vessels were scarce, and, moreover, the waterside people of Corfu had no love for the returning Englishmen. Chance, however, threw them into contact with a lean, hawk-faced seafarer named Gorz, who more than hinted that he was a pirate. The rascal professed a great admiration for Cœur de Lion, of whom he had heard much; and, with many strange oaths, expressed a willingness to put himself and his vessel at the disposal of the English party.

Richard and Hugh trusted Gorz not at all, and looked with some doubt at the swarm of dark-skinned villains on board his craft. As their own party would be large and well armed, however, and more than a match for

treble the crew of knife-bristling rascals, they concluded a bargain with the pirate and returned to the king without further delay.

Not all of those who had come from Acre with the king could go north for the extremely perilous trip by land, and, therefore, a number would be obliged to sail from Corfu on the vessel on which they had arrived.

Cœur de Lion found himself now confronted with a pleasing problem. Every man, from the lowest to the highest, declared himself willing to accompany him, many even begging to be with him, and he was obliged to select those who should go with his person.

Richard of Devon, of course, was to be of the land party, and Peter, who had served him with the utmost love and devotion, wept when he knew he must return to England masterless. Richard was deeply affected by Peter's love, and he gripped his vassal's hand and bade him farewell with wet eyes,—for, lord as he was, he loved the low-born man

who had served him so faithfully,—giving him many a charge for home.

“I would go with you!” cried Peter, his honest eyes overflowing. “Who else can serve you as I can?”

“Why, no one,” answered Richard, kindly; “no one, dear Peter. You are a good vassal, and, heaven granting me a safe return, you shall have free land in Darby. Yes, and you shall have that land in any event, for it is set forth in the writings I am sending my sister through you.”

Peter laughed chokingly. “Who can serve you as I can?” he repeated.

“You must return as I say,” said Richard, firmly. “You will serve me best by so doing. Sir Hugh’s Hazri goes with you.”

“He is a Saracen!” exclaimed Peter.

“And yet he grieves to part with Sir Hugh, Peter.”

Peter made no response, and after a time he became calm. He kissed Richard’s hand in the end, and, with fidelity in his simple, loyal heart, went to his quarters.

King Richard, with his goodly company of pilgrims,—stout, keen-eyed, sunburned men, who wore swords and daggers under their brown robes,—embarked with Gorz on the turn of the tide and began the sail up the Adriatic.

When they weighed anchor the weather was threatening, and the wind at length became a gale; but Gorz was a master sailor, and handled his craft with consummate skill.

The storm followed the vessel up the coast persistently, however, and increased in violence from hour to hour until all feared the laboring craft would not live. The sea rolled tremendously, and, beaten by the violent wind, the vessel rolled and pitched unceasingly in the mountainous waves, with the brine seething across the open decks.

Night fell upon the day of the worst of the storm, making the terror of the wild sea and howling gale still greater, and all on board the laboring, straining ship offered up their prayers and entreaties for deliverance.

“We must make land around the next spit, King,” roared Gorz that night, sadly, but unafraid, “or else we shall go down, for we have sprung a great leak.”

“Then land,” returned Richard, coolly, knowing well that there was no place of shelter or safe landing.

Gorz, who really admired the king to a point near devotion, went above, and with curses and blows drove his crew to their work. On through the pitch-black night they plunged in the terrible seas, and, guided by Gorz, rounded the point he had in mind and drove toward the shore—marked to his eyes by the gloom of hills and after a time by the dull white of the great surf thundering along the beach. On and on the gallant little vessel pitched toward the land, until at length, under the hand of the fearless, skillful old sea rascal, she went aground with a mighty thud and a shock that sent every man from his feet. The waters rolled over her as she lay quivering there in the night, but Gorz labored like a Hercules, and, with

skill and might and courage, put all ashore—save four who were washed overboard.

With the wind howling about them and the furious sea thundering upon their left, the king of England and Richard and all the company—crusaders and pirates—knelt down in the darkness among the rocks and gave thanks for rescue from death in the sea.

CHAPTER XII

THE strength of the great storm blew out in the night, and the shipwrecked company awoke to a clear, bright morning. Gorz examined his vessel at the first opportunity, but found it beaten into a shapeless mass and rapidly disintegrating.

Cœur de Lion paid the seaman generously, even above his due, and during the day the pirates in a body departed and set off southward along the coast.

According to the rascally old seaman, the king and his followers were ashore between Aquileia and Venice, and there was nothing to do but to press forward on foot. Richard realized the difficulties and dangers before him, but believed his disguise as a pilgrim safe enough. Hundreds, and even thousands, of pilgrims and warriors were tramping homeward all over Europe, and he had no doubt he would be safe.

Soon after Gorz and his crew had gone, the king began the long journey for home.

Richard and Hugh Willock walked together by the sea, close to the king and Sir Baldwin. Now and then, during the first mile or two, Hugh came to a halt and looked back.

“By the Cross!” he exclaimed at length, upon one of these halts, “I begin to believe in the old soothsayer of Dartmouth. He foretold much of the truth about you, and I now doubt not that I shall land in England empty of purse. All my good fortune, save a few gold pieces, I have left behind me there, buried in the sea.”

“I’m sorry,” returned Richard, “but you have won honor, the admiration of our lord, and I bethink me the old soothsayer said you would find wealth in England.”

Hugh grinned. “He said even so—true. I shall be spared the trouble of carrying it,” he added, dryly.

For several days the party pushed slowly along on foot. They were not used to walk-

ing, and, because of that and the uncertainty of their position, they made slow progress. It was deemed wise to follow the coast until they were in sure knowledge of their way, and this caution added many a long mile to their journey.

Upon one occasion they fell in with a large body of men who had apparently come ashore from some pirate vessel, and these fierce fellows, scenting wealth among so large a body of pilgrims, and never suspecting the travelers to be seasoned crusaders armed to the teeth, spread themselves laughingly across the way and bade the meek body come to a halt for a plucking. Too late they saw that the seeming doves were eagles.

Cœur de Lion, wroth at the indignity from these rough villains, cried out fiercely, and, against a word of caution from Richard and Baldwin, whipped his great blade from under his robe and ordered his party to follow.

The pilgrims, grim veterans of many a battle, were not slow to obey the king, and,

sword in hand, they bore down upon the rabble like a resistless wave, and, although stoutly opposed, soon put them to rout.

“ ’Tis a dear-bought victory,” said Cœur de Lion, regretfully, when the fray was over and the pirates were scuttling off like rabbits among the rocks and thickets.

Three of his gentlemen lay prone in the sunshine, quite dead, and several others were faint from blows or loss of blood.

“ I like it not, sire,” put in Baldwin. “ It would have been better if we had stood and given up a few gold pieces.”

The king threw back his massive head, and glanced at his loyal friend with flashing eye.

“ Think you the king of England stands to a handful of louts like a peddler!”

“ Nay, sire, but I fear those villains will carry news of this fray and you afar, as on the four winds. It is not well that men should know the king of England travels by land homeward. I like it very little.”

At these words Hugh nodded to Richard in agreement.

“He is right, boy,” he said in a low tone. “Those rascals know full well that no ordinary man was here, and the news will travel like the light and search us out wherever we go. You are near the king’s heart, and you must whisper a caution to our lord, although I doubt not it is much too late.”

“Did it not make your blood boil, Hugh, to see those rascals front us?”

“Aye, of course,” answered the stalwart swordsman, “but I agree with Sir Baldwin. When you proclaim yourself a barnyard fowl you must not scream and swoop like an eagle. This gallant fight—for those fellows opposed us in goodly fashion—is, I fear, a defeat for us.”

After burying the dead with a brief ceremony, and attending to the wounded, Cœur de Lion and his followers pushed on as before.

During the day Richard, who was much with the king, made occasion to preach caution to his lord.

The king was free to admit that the fight

was unfortunate; but, of course, there was nothing to do but to keep on the way and try to escape the net of his many enemies. It was certain that there would go abroad, with the amazing speed with which such news travels, rumor that Cœur de Lion was journeying afoot in disguise.

For several days, however, no untoward event occurred; but late one afternoon, as they made camp in a grove near the sea, a stranger came from the shore and boldly walked amidst the group of stalwart pilgrims. He was a dark, squat man, with a hook nose and piercing black eyes. He was dressed in soft, tan-colored leather; golden hoops dangled from his ears; and in his belt of crimson stuff was a curved sword and two daggers. He approached the king unhesitatingly, hat in hand and bowing low.

“I remember you in Acre,” said Cœur de Lion at once, his keen glance upon the man.

“And I, sire,” returned the stranger in

broken English, "remember you and your mercy. You saved me from death ——"

"Which probably you deserved."

The dark man grinned slightly and outspread his hands in a quick gesture. "Yet—I remember," he said, "and am none the less grateful. Word goes up the coast, my lord, that the king of England walks. I know the country and the language, and I come to pay a debt."

"What think you, Richard?" asked the king, turning to his minstrel.

"I think the man would be an honest guide, sire," answered Richard. "I now recall him and his vow to serve Your Majesty upon occasion."

The dark man looked at the boy steadily for a moment and bowed, his eyes glowing, and, when Cœur de Lion accepted his service, thanked him for his trusting words.

When the party moved on the next day, Vasci, the dark man, was among them, the accepted guide. Every man vowed that he should die speedily upon the slightest sign of

treachery; but, as Richard realized, Vasci was in reality grateful to the English king and eager to serve him well. He proved a valuable man for the party of returning crusaders, for, knowing the country, he saved them many a weary mile and many a trouble in hamlet and on the road.

“We are now in bad land, sire,” said Vasci one morning.

“What land, rascal?” queried the king.

“The territory of Count Meinhard, of Goritz, sire, the nephew of the noble Marquis of Montferrat, whose death many men lay to your feet.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the king with an angry frown. Persistent enemies had made it believed that he had compassed the death of the marquis, although it was not truth. Halting and turning, he conferred with Richard and Baldwin and the others.

It was deemed wise to try to secure from Count Meinhard permission for a body of pilgrims to pass through his territory, and Cœur de Lion despatched two men to him to

get the passport, sending for a present a splendid ruby ring from his finger. The messengers were charged to say, if questioned, that the chief men of the party were one Baldwin and a rich merchant named Hugh.

The king and his followers camped in the woods near the roadside to await the return of the messengers, Richard and Hugh Willock sitting together under a tree apart, talking of Darby and making plans for the future.

“Our messengers are on the return hot-foot, Richard,” announced Hugh, suddenly, pointing up the road glimmering in the sun, where two running, familiar figures came into view. “They have ill news, I vow,” he declared as the men came near. “Come!” They arose together and joined the rest of the party who had pushed out to the road to meet the running men.

The messengers showed bad news in their faces. One of the gentlemen, Sir Herbert Wynde, held out the king’s glorious ruby.

“What’s this?” demanded the king, as his eye fell upon the flashing gem. “Speak a smooth tale,” he exclaimed, as both the winded men began to tell what had occurred to send them back on wings. “You tell, Sir Herbert.”

“We made our request, sire, as charged,” began the knight he named, “and presented the ring as from the rich merchant Hugh. Meinhard—who must have news of Your Majesty—studied it long. ‘This,’ said he presently, ‘belongs to Richard, the king of England. It could belong to no other man. I have sworn to seize all pilgrims from those parts, but I will return this gift and give him free leave to depart.’”

“Treachery!” exclaimed Baldwin, instantly. “He means to seize thee, sire.”

“Aye!” cried both the messengers, fiercely.

Cœur de Lion nodded, his face dark.

“He will expect me now to leave openly by sea,” he said at length, “but I will press on afoot.” He turned about and looked into

the faces of the quiet group. "Richard, you go with me, and Sir Herbert will also come. The rest of you gentlemen will abide here for a day, and then seek conveyance by sea."

No move was made during the day, but at nightfall the king and Richard of Devon and Sir Herbert, after a quiet leave-taking, crept from the encampment and started northward.

The king and his two young followers, for Sir Herbert was but a young man, went on resolutely, sometimes traveling by day, but mostly at night. They were without a knowledge of the country; they had no compass or map, and dared ask little of the way. Although they did not know it then, in their zigzag route they were making toward Vienna, the city of the king's most bitter personal foe.

They did not bear themselves like fugitives, for all were men who feared little—who feared no other men. They chatted gayly and freely, talking of courts and of wars. Cœur de Lion, while never forgetting

he was a great king, was a pleasant companion. He called often upon Richard for song and story in lonely ways, and with him sang the song they had composed together before the walls of Acre. But he also spoke seriously many times to his beloved young minstrel, instructing him in the affairs of England and laying bare many of his plans. He did not do this idly, for he plainly declared his intention of raising the young man to a high rank to serve the crown. He had early seen his ability and power to be, and, besides, he loved him. He taught him many things of state, and made clear to him much of his policy concerning both England and his holdings in France. It was exceedingly fortunate that Cœur de Lion did this, for his teaching of the boy minstrel was to save him months of bitterness.

On and on they went, still nearing the capital of the king's great enemy, the Duke of Austria.

One day they descried a great city before them in broad plains, and, not knowing what

place it was, camped among the hills near by. Cœur de Lion had no intention of going into this city. He sent Herbert below for bread and a map, if one could be procured, and directed young Richard northward to look over the way they had best go to skirt the city.

Richard strolled blithely along, singing to himself. Care sat lightly enough upon him. To his mind, Richard of England was the finest and greatest man in the world; and, while he knew the perils about them, it never struck him that ill could actually befall his lord.

Having determined upon the road for the night's travel, he turned about and began retracing his steps, singing as he went.

A wrinkled old woman sat near the road before a thatched cottage, basking in the late sun, as the stalwart English boy strode along singing to himself. She arose as Richard came near, and on a cane hobbled toward the road, looking at him with bright, beady eyes.

"You could sing in a king's court, boy,"

she said, shrilly, nodding her old head emphatically. Richard halted and glanced at her with a smile. He could not understand her words, but saw she was pleased.

The crone, realizing that here was a foreigner, beamed at him and nodded still more, and was still nodding as Richard resumed his song and his way.

The resting-place from which he had parted with Cœur de Lion was on a hillside in a grove of fine oaks, from which they could command a view of the city and here and there for miles catch a glimpse of the great Danube flashing in the sunshine. It was dusk when Richard turned from the highway and glided into the forest aisles. He pressed eagerly forward through the woods, his keen eyes searching. He was used to woods and hills, and had the true hunter's sense of location; and yet when he heard no sound save his own light tread a thrill of fear and dread went through his loyal breast. He stood stock-still and peered about among the darkening shadows. Absolute silence

prevailed, save presently the vesper bells coming with a faint silvery tinkle upward from the city. Then he sounded the nightingale's notes,—the signal used for weeks,—but there was no response.

“Peace!” he exclaimed to himself sternly, and with an effort of the will choked off the panic that surged upon him like a flood. “I must have made a mistake!” And yet even in the dim light he recognized the spot where he had been before, and found near at hand a tree from which, as he went out, he had torn a piece of bark for a mark to aid his return.

Sure of his position, he whistled again. No answer, save a slight whispering echo. There was no sound at all except the rustling of foliage in the darkening woods, the rest-time twittering of birds, and the mellow fluting of the far-off languorous bells.

Again he gave his call, this time loudly, even piercingly, and when he had waited full five minutes for a response he pushed on farther till at length he came to the spot

where he had looked down upon Vienna with his king. He halted as he reached this place and recognized it beyond a doubt. Under this oak the king had reclined—he had left him there; but now his trained, keen eyes saw other signs of human presence—the footprints of many men. A cold wave swept into his heart. He understood. His lord had been sought out and found—surprised. He was taken. He was in the hands of his enemies!

For a moment, in despair and grief, he was weak, and he buried his sun-tanned face in his hands and sobbed huskily.

“O Richard! O my king!” he groaned, clenching his hands. “Why was I not here to die for you! No man should say a word of ill to thee while a drop of my blood remained. O my king!” Anguish rang in his voice, and showed in his face as he glanced about among the shadows.

As he stood there, grief-stricken, despairing, and yet raging, he realized in what a position he remained, for he doubted not that

Herbert was taken with the king or lost in the city or killed there. He was alone hundreds of leagues from home, a stranger of a hated race. What could he do? What could one man avail among untold thousands?

He went slowly down upon his knees, and gave thanks for benefits and asked aid for days to come.

Arising at length, he stripped the pilgrim's robe from his stalwart person and stood there in the night, erect in his good brown suit, with Goodwill swinging at his thigh, and raised his clenched hand up.

"O Richard!" he cried, with a passionate catch in his throat. "O Richard, my king! I will seek at every castle-gate in Europe for thee, and never see Devon again till I have found thee! Dear heaven! hear and aid me."

For a moment he was motionless, tense, his words dying away on the night wind. Then, with the vow deep in his heart, he turned, and, leaving the pilgrim's robe where he had cast it, struck off for the road on his search for the missing king of England.

CHAPTER XIII

UPON reaching the road, he strode resolutely away in the direction of the city below, which then he did not know was Vienna.

Even in his agitation he had essayed to read by signs what had occurred where he had last seen the king; but his trained eye told him very little—in fact, nothing save that many men had been there. He was sure Cœur de Lion had not been taken by a chance band of robbers, for he knew the king would have resisted such to the death; and there had been no sign of a struggle. He knew, of course, that he was in Austria, where his sovereign had powerful enemies, and he believed that the king had been surprised by a man of high rank to whom he had surrendered his mighty sword. In this belief he was correct.

As he swung along among the giant trees

or under the stars in some open space, his heart beat high with chivalric purpose and his handsome face was set in determination. There suddenly came to his mind the wonderful prophecy made by the soothsayer in Dartmouth, so many of whose words had come true—"You shall render unto England's present king a service men shall tell a thousand years." This saying rang in his mind like a bugle-call on a clear morning; it stood before his eyes in letters of fire. The generous blood leaped in his heart. His tight lips parted, and a smile came into his face. Unconsciously he lengthened his stride, the glorious hope and confidence of youth in him like a song.

"I shall save him!" he repeatedly exclaimed to himself; and pictured a score of scenes where he was laying down his life for the king in rocky passes, within castle walls, or in the open field of battle. He thrilled in all his being.

When at length he reached the end of the forest, somewhat sober after his exaltation,

and struck the open road falling away to the city on a long, gradual slope, the valley lay in the soft lights and shadows of evening.

Occasionally now the young crusader passed men or clumsy, laden women in the road; and before long the city rose before him, its radiance from numberless lights rising skyward and vying with the misty gleam of the coming moon. A hundred church-steeples and castle-towers and battlements were silhouetted against the sky.

Richard was mightily surprised to come upon a city so large, a city which seemed to him far more magnificent than London.

Hunger began to press him, and when he entered the narrow, crooked streets of the town he began to look about at once for an eating-place, although the quarter in which he found himself looked far from inviting.

He entered the first tavern he saw, however, striding in without hesitation. The room was long and narrow and low-raftered, set with clean tables at regular intervals; and

it was comparatively deserted at the time, although at the far end sat a stout, red-faced, gray-haired soldier, his soft, broad-brimmed hat before him on the table. In his hand was a great earthenware tankard, on which were raised representations of clusters of grapes and vines, truthfully colored, from which he now and then took a sip, at the same time looking keenly at the newcomer.

Richard went halfway down the room, thankful to find so clean a spot in so unpromising a part of the city, and took a seat at one of the tables, facing the other occupant of the place. After he had rapped sharply several times a fat man, bald on the head, but favored with long red whiskers, made his appearance from a side door and attended him, wiping the already clean table with commendable zeal.

The young minstrel gave his order in the best French he could muster. The servant looked at him blankly, then spoke in some tongue unknown to him, yet sounding familiar. It seemed unwise to try English, so

Richard motioned to the stout, jolly-looking man at the end of the room.

The waiter called out respectfully to the soldier, who, after a last pull at his huge, curious drinking vessel, arose, took up his hat, and came down the room, his sword jingling on the stone flooring.

“Can you speak French, sir?” asked Richard, looking up at the fellow and meeting his shrewd eyes.

“Yes,” answered the stout man-at-arms, in French. “Can I serve you? I take it you are newly arrived in Vienna?”

“I have been here but a short time. You can indeed serve me by repeating my order for supper to this man. Will you honor me by drinking again?” Richard nodded toward the table from which the other had arisen. He repeated his order for supper.

The soldier sat easily down and gave Richard’s order, not forgetting to add thereto the wine he was invited to drink. When the waiter had gone, he turned upon Richard and carelessly asked him many ques-

tions. He was a good-looking man, and his eye was twinkling and full of humor, yet very keen. He studied the handsome young Englishman covertly with interest.

"Maybe you have been to the crusade, friend?" he said, as the waiter left the second time, after serving a great measure of wine in a beautiful vessel similar to the one the soldier had left on the other table.

"Yes," returned Richard, who was conscious of the other's scrutiny.

"French?"

"English," said Richard, promptly.

The soldier nodded, showing his surprise at the response. He had expected something different; he believed Richard was English, but believed he would lie. A puzzled look crept into his laughing eyes, and he half obscured his red face in the flagon.

"I would own it seldom, sir," he advised, as he set the vessel on the table.

Richard grew red, and unconsciously stiffened, fire in his eye.

“A courteous suggestion for this good wine, young friend,” put in the soldier, quickly.

The waiter at this juncture returned to the room, heavily laden with dishes, and set the supper out, the two men sitting without speech. When he had gone with his due, Richard, with an excuse to the man drinking his wine, attacked the meal with a keen appetite.

“Take no offense at what I said, young sir,” said the stout man, “but the rumor is abroad to-night that your great King Richard was found in the hills to-day and yielded up his sword to the duke.”

“The duke of Austria?” Richard flashed a look at the other, who was observing him closely.

“Yes.”

Richard could not wholly conceal his excitement.

“It cannot be, sir.”

“So the word is.”

“And he is here in—Vienna?”

The soldier shut one eye, and, cocking his head to one side, stared at him shrewdly with the other. "It does not follow, sir. No man can tell." Suddenly he leaned across the table, with both eyes open, very serious. "I too have been in Acre. If I mistake not, you were close friend to the English king. I remember you."

"What then?" demanded Richard, tensely, pushing back from the table and quietly kicking Goodwill into position. In his flash of anger he spoke in English.

"Speak French, young sir," advised the soldier at length, meeting his eye for a moment. "I have no quarrel with you. I wish you well. I will make a suggestion, if you will pardon one below your rank. Do you travel for England—wherever it may be—and seek nothing but the shortest road."

With a little laugh Richard moved up to his supper. "I thank you, sir," he said. He saw that this fellow had no enmity against him, and he was joyful that he had news of the king, who surely was safe even

if a prisoner. He finished his supper quietly, and, after a long talk with the good-natured soldier about the war, declared that he must make arrangements for his lodging.

“I doubt not that they will entertain you here, young sir,” said the swordsman, “if it please you.”

“It would be well enough,” observed Richard, who was very tired and did not incline to a long walk. The tavern was humble, and apparently—to judge from the street sounds—in a rough quarter; but it was clean and neat, and the meal had been really excellent.

“They entertain few with beds,” said Gregory, the gray-haired soldier, “but me they know well.” He rapped sharply on the table, and when the waiter came flying in he spoke to him in a peremptory way. The waiter sped off with his message, whatever it was, and in a few minutes a thin, dark man entered the room and approached the table. Gregory spoke to him a few moments in their own tongue, and then in

French requested lodging for his young French friend who was homeward bound from the crusade.

The landlord grumbled a bit, but in the end signified his willingness to accommodate. As the young stranger arose, the thin man lifted his eyebrows to Gregory, who responded with a quick wink.

Parting from Gregory, who was at his third flagon of wine, Richard followed the dark landlord up-stairs to a neat little chamber under the eaves, overlooking the street.

When the landlord had departed, the young man looked out the window, which was breast high, and for a few moments watched the shadowy forms of swaggering men, in the narrow street below, going to and fro or entering or leaving the drinking-room in which he had supped.

He was jubilant and hopeful. If the king had fallen into the duke's hands, he was safe at least, for the duke would not dare to harm his person, although he might hold him

prisoner and claim a ransom. The boy was dead tired, both physically and mentally, so presently he blew out his taper and, tumbling into bed, with Goodwill snug under his arm, lay staring at the sloping roof a few inches over him, until suddenly he fell fast asleep.

He awoke in the morning with a start. The sun was streaming cheerfully into the little chamber, but there was no sound. For a time he lay motionless in surprise at his position. For many a week he had been sleeping under the trees or the stars, and it seemed strange and a little bewildering to look up and discern a roof over him near enough to touch with his hand. But very soon he recalled where he was and the terrible thing that had occurred. He jumped out of bed, drawing his splendid blade with him, and devoutly said his morning prayers, again swearing to devote himself to searching out his captured king.

He found a basin of water on a stand in the corner, which was a rare convenience in

a public place, and, after bathing his face, made ready to descend. He had not entirely disrobed in the night, so his dressing took but a short time.

When he drew his jacket from under his pillow, where he had placed it for safe keeping, a chill of apprehension went through him. He stood transfixed, staring at the garment in his hand. How light it felt! He turned it inside out. The pockets where he had kept his gold were ripped away and were quite empty. He had been robbed! Not a single piece was left him. The blood of anger encrimsoned his face. His eye flashed. What a fool he had been! Now, when it was too late, he recalled that on the preceding night below he had given too much evidence that he was well supplied with money; and he recalled, too, the covetous gleam in Gregory's eyes when he had paid in gold, and that the stout, jolly rascal had stuck to him like a fly. Richard was not wholly a fool. He saw now that Gregory and the landlord — whose exchange of

glances at this moment he understood—had leagued to rob him.

He sprang across the room and looked at Goodwill, which he had laid on the bed upon arising. His rage subsided in his satisfaction at finding that the sword still bore its jewel. He had lain on his weapon, and probably the thief or thieves had found it impossible to get at it, or perhaps had not noted its gold rings and the splendid diamond in the hilt.

“I’m undone!” he cried to himself, bitterly, as he realized his predicament—penniless in a strange land. And yet, as is sometimes the case, what seemed to be a great misfortune was the most fortunate thing that could occur. With plenty of money his course might have been different, but he was to be forced to a way of life of which he had never dreamed. Richard did not then think in this way; he was too angry and too worried. As he thought of Gregory, the man who had served him so ill, his face hardened; and, buckling on Goodwill, he strode from

the room and down-stairs to the apartment where he had supped.

The drinking-place was empty save for two or three peaceful-appearing men and the same red-whiskered waiter who had served him in the evening. He beckoned to the servant, who came promptly forward. He tried to make the fellow understand that he wanted to see either Gregory or the landlord, but could not. The waiter apparently made nothing of his words or signs. Despairing of making him understand, the young crusader rapped soundly on the table, but the only effect was to make those in the room stare at him in mingled displeasure and fear.

“Can anybody here speak French or English?” he demanded, sternly, speaking first in one language and then in the other. The occupants of the place merely stared harder, and no one made response. He turned fiercely upon the waiter and made signs of eating. At this the red-whiskered fellow broadly grinned and nodded emphatically, scurrying away at once.

Richard seated himself at a table near the main door, and in a few minutes the fellow served him a plentiful breakfast.

“ They don’t intend I shall be turned away without a meal, anyway,” he muttered, grimly, as he began to eat, all the time keeping his eye sharp for a glimpse of the landlord or the gray-haired, stocky soldier. He ate slowly, his anger cooling, but not leaving him altogether. His fingers itched for one or the other of the two rascals. He knew well that it would be extremely perilous for him, an Englishman, to turn the place upside down, even if he were in the right; so when he had sat around an hour or more after finishing his breakfast he decided to swallow his misfortune and go his way, making the best of it. He therefore arose, and, unchallenged by the waiter, who was watching him with a sly grin, swung out of the unlucky place into the narrow, sunny street, setting off on the quest to which he was sworn.

He pushed on through mean and narrow

streets without adventure until he came to broad, clean avenues and buildings and shops as fine as any he had ever seen. The streets here were thronged with soldiers, afoot and on horseback, in brilliant colors and plumes and glittering steel. Splendid carriages, drawn by superb horses, dashed by, bearing ladies in their gorgeous silks and gleaming jewels. Although travel-stained, Richard was still sufficiently well clad to move among the gay, proud throngs without being oddly conspicuous, although he was so straight and handsome that many a person looked at him more than once.

He realized, of course, that without gold he would soon find himself unable to mingle so little noted among proud people, and he was sorely puzzled as to what he could do, although not alarmed. He assuredly would not starve; for no man need starve in these days when he had a good sword-arm to hire to a leader. But it was one thing to keep himself in food and clothes, and quite another to make it possible to live in this land

of strangers and enemies and prosecute a quest both difficult and perilous. He knit his brows in thought, and swung aimlessly along, unmindful of the glances of admiration or curiosity he received.

At noontime, after his long wandering, he began to be faint with hunger, and with a grim smile he tightened his belt and still swung on. After another hour of walking he sat on a bench in a park before a massive old church and rested his weary legs, although he could not ease his mind, which was still puzzling hard over the serious problem of living without delivering his person to any man.

He became so uneasy that he could remain on the bench no longer; therefore, arising, he resumed his aimless strolling. On and on and on he went, now and then finding himself in places where he had been before. It was immaterial to him where he went, however; and even when the twilight shadows lengthened in the streets he still doggedly walked as before, and kept thinking, thinking, all

the time. What should he do? What could he do? How was he to live to search for his king? The problem seemed too difficult for solving. He could, of course,—and truthfully,—go through the country and, representing himself as a lost pilgrim from the Holy Land,—thousands of whom were likewise lost then throughout Europe,—ask aid like a beggar; but this his proud heart would not let him do—hardly think of.

Suddenly he recalled the diamond in his sword hilt.

“No!” he cried to himself, rebelliously. “I will not part with it!” He stood stock-still, and the street was now too deserted and dusky for his peculiar behavior to excite notice. “Yes, yes, I will!” he decided at length, his eyes shining. “I will! It’s for the king!”

Having made this decision, he looked to see where he was, and after a while set off toward a row of shops he had noted, now resigned to pawn his diamond for gold to aid him.

He readily found a place where he could pledge the jewel in Goodwill, and in the shop took the diamond from the hilt himself, for he would not allow the money-lender to place a finger upon the sword. Too proud to haggle, he exchanged the gem for gold and was soon in the street again, knowing he had been cheated by the shifty-eyed, cringing broker, but, fortunately for his peace of mind, not knowing how much.

Richard was young and hot-blooded, and a fighter every inch, although a generous foe. In this day men deemed it honor to give a blow for every one received, and it was natural that he should think of the theft of which he had been victim and strongly desire to deal punishment. When he thought of Gregory his pulse quickened, and he made an effort to find the quarter of the city where he had spent the night. It was now late, however; the way was long; the city was as a maze to him; and, as he could speak only French and his native tongue, he found it difficult to get directions. He was, of

course, chary about speaking to people in the street then, for men eyed him suspiciously, and he knew it would be easy for him to get in a brawl that might cost him life or liberty—and give no advantage in any event.

After he had vainly sought his way for a time, it came to his mind like a flash of light that he had no right to think of his own desires, and then, with a little laugh, he gave Gregory up. He was not mean-spirited or revengeful, but he did hope that chance would put the treacherous, jolly dog in his way.

He had now no difficulty in finding a lodging-place, a much better place than the neat but low tavern where he had stayed on the preceding night.

“I must seek less dear quarters,” he said to himself after a hearty supper, for the prices he was forced to pay amazed him and made alarming inroads upon the price of his diamond.

But before the evening was over he felt well repaid for what he deemed extrava-

gance. The landlord, a stout, handsome man, with fine brown eyes and a full, silky, white beard, was taken with the English boy's appearance and entered into conversation with him. The fellow could speak French fluently, far better than Richard could, and he asked many questions and told him much about the city, of which he was extremely proud.

"Did you serve under the great English king, sir?" asked the affable landlord, when Richard had frankly told his race and stated that he was returning from the crusade.

"Under his banner,—yes."

The handsome landlord swept a glance about the bright supper-room, where many gorgeously clad gentlemen sat at their wine, some gayly chatting and laughing, others conversing with heads together.

"You know, young sir, I suppose," he said, in a low tone, "that he was captured in the hills with one follower."

"I have heard such a story during the

day," returned Richard, coolly, while his heart jumped.

"It is the truth, sir," asserted the man, proudly, although rather sorry to hurt the other's feelings. He hated the name of England, but liked this young man who had fought under Richard of the Lion Heart.

Richard smiled, wisely believing he should gain more information by apparent disbelief and indifference than by asking questions.

"It is the truth, sir," repeated the landlord. "With my own eyes I saw him pass this door yesterday with the duke's soldiers—a giant of a man, with reddish hair, and—ah, like one who feared not the devil himself!"

"Yes!" put in Richard, straightening, his eyes flashing proudly. "But," he said, shrewdly, "that might not be Richard of England, for I heard he left Palestine and sailed direct for England."

"With my own *eyes*, sir," exclaimed the landlord, with a shake of the head. "Men told me it was Richard of England. He

was wrecked and sought to gain England afoot. Even now I have here one who was with the duke when your lord was taken."

"Which man?" Involuntarily Richard's hand leaped to his sword, but he tried to conceal that act by letting his hand remain where it had flown to fumble with his belt.

The landlord noted the flying hand and the young crusader's flashing eye, but said nothing. He indicated a dark, tall man in a splendid suit of ruby velvet and lace, sitting far down the room near a window.

"That, sir, is Captain Joseph, and he was with the duke. I have the story from his own lips."

"I would have word with him," said Richard, pushing from the table.

"No!" expostulated the landlord. "He is in ill temper, young sir."

"Ill temper!" exclaimed Richard, contemptuously.

At this moment, however, the soldier arose, and, without speaking to any one, left the room. As he disappeared, Richard,

ignoring the landlord's friendly warning, leaped to his feet and followed into the night, intent upon speech with the duke's captain.

Before him was a narrow way, where the upper stories of the houses almost met and shut out all light save a ribbon of star-gemmed sky. Down this street he could discern a group of men, preceded by two boys carrying links; and among them he could make out the superbly clad figure of the duke's tall captain, the dim light flashing on his steel corselet and rapier.

He went after this group at a half run and finally overtook them—the captain himself and six or eight men-at-arms in steel caps and breastplates. Crying out in French, he pushed forward, trying to elbow in upon Joseph for speech.

His impetuosity and foolishness cost him dear. The captain thought he was attacked by robbers or a band of personal enemies. With a cry to his men, he leaped about, whipping his rapier from its scabbard. With a chorus of shouts, his men-at-arms half en-

circled the minstrel and with a clash of steel unsheathed their blades.

Unable to make himself heard or his pacific intention understood in the exciting moment, Richard drew Goodwill to hold off the semicircle of glittering swords that now menaced him and flashed toward him like vivid gleams of fire. He met the press with his usual spirit, unafraid, but with surging blood. Even as steel clashed against steel, he shouted out for peace, but he was sorely outnumbered, and before any one could understand a word he was beaten down by many blades.

In two minutes all was over, and the captain and his men went on with the links, leaving the minstrel prone and silent in a growing red pool in the dark and deserted street.

CHAPTER XIV

RICHARD came slowly to consciousness, dazed and exceedingly weak, and stared up at the black, overhanging houses and at the strip of sky. He recalled what had occurred—saw again the press of fierce, half-seen faces and the flashing of swords—and marveled to find himself alive.

Struggling to his elbow, he stared down the narrow thoroughfare and saw the lights of the tavern he had left. As the rooms were still ablaze, he realized that he could not have been senseless very long.

He managed to gain his feet at length, although he stood very uncertainly, and knew that by some great good fortune he had escaped mortal or serious wound. The truth was, luckily for him, that the captain was in haste, and the men-at-arms after striking him down had merely robbed him and then gone their way, indifferent as to

his condition. Richard learned at once that his money was gone, feeling for it as soon as he stood, but he was too sick then to care much. He wobbled along unsteadily, helping himself by placing his hand against the buildings, and went straight to the tavern doorway he had left so precipitately.

The kindly landlord saw him, and, crying to his servants to aid, ran forward, compassionate. He was one of the rare men of earth, and he had the young minstrel carried to one of his rooms and put between sheets and attended immediately by a surgeon who lived near by.

Richard, having no armor, had been slashed in several places, but his skill had saved him from a great wound. He had undoubtedly fainted from loss of blood as he fought, and no one of his opponents had taken the trouble to pass a blade through him as he lay recumbent.

His recovery was very rapid, and he was soon himself again, very grateful to the landlord who had proved so good a friend.

“ I will send you recompense from England one day,” he said when he was ready to go.

“ I will receive it gladly, sir, in memory of you,” returned the landlord. He had kept Richard and treated him like a loved son even when he knew the boy to be without a single gold piece, and he had, in fact, pressed a little money upon him at the time of parting. He never expected to receive a gift from England, but he was too honest to say it would be unwelcome.

With merely the landlord’s modest gift, Richard left the inn and his good friend, who parted with him almost tearfully, and again threaded the streets of Vienna. He reproached himself for getting wounded and thus losing time, but he was wiser now. And, more than all, his lack of money, which he had never felt before in his life, had given him a new idea. While mending in the inn, the thought had come to him—he would sing as a public minstrel to pay his travel and keep. It hurt his pride like a blow; it was

terrible to him. He, an English noble who had sat in the presence of kings, to sing in tavern and castle-yard and hall! It was almost unthinkable, and his face crimsoned every time he thought of it. And yet his resolution was made. It was service for the king. He did not know it then,—and, perhaps, never did, and would certainly have disbelieved if any had made the statement,—but he would serve the king better as a singing stroller than as a knight with purse crammed with gold.

Everybody now knew that Richard, the fierce and arrogant lord of England, was in the toils in Austria. The young minstrel, fast learning the language, heard this upon all sides, but he knew not where to turn, for no whisper came of where his lord might be.

Richard sang first as a public minstrel in a tavern in Vienna. Hunger drove him to it.

Among the diners in this place one night he rapped for attention and stood upright. Fear clutched at his throat even as when in

Dartmouth his king had asked him to sing; but hunger's urge was fierce, and determination to earn his bread and seek in a capacity that would give him a freedom for spying urged still harder. His face was hot, and his heart was cold. Men laughed at his hesitation, and their voices were like blows. Steadying himself, he lifted his voice in the bold sword-song of Devon, his voice quavering at first, then steady and becoming mellow and even and full and passionate. A storm of applause and considerable money rewarded this first effort, and his heart was full of joy, because this success assured him that he would be welcome in any castle in Europe.

He sang again when he had collected his money, as he knew was the custom of minstrels. To try his powers still more—for he had become quite cool and self-possessed—he gathered a circle about him, calling those who could understand French, and told a tale he had heard in a bazaar in Acre. After the manner of the Oriental story-

teller, he halted his tale at the exciting point and demanded his reward, and, when money was given, he concluded.

The landlord of this tavern, with tears, begged him to remain with him, offering him a stated sum of money, a fine room, and his living.

Richard, however, had no intention of remaining in one place. Every day counted in his search. He sang in many taverns in the city, several times in that of Franz, the innkeeper who had been so kind to him, and everywhere he tried to learn about the king. His searching and cautious queries brought him no knowledge. Richard of England was gone—it was as if he had evaporated. No one knew where he was detained.

Richard of Devon became so well known throughout Vienna for his songs and stories, and was in such demand, that he determined to leave. He had sung in every castle in the city and in every tavern of decent repute, and always his first and his last song was the

love ballad he had composed with his king before the walls of Acre.

He deemed it not unlikely that in some way he might be held while he was popular, even made a prisoner somewhere, as the lords were not patient with singers and cared nothing for their whims or desires. Therefore he left the city under cover of night and struck westward through the country along the Danube.

For weeks he kept on, but stopped at every castle on the way, sometimes remaining a day or two, always singing the ballad of Acre under the windows of the towers and keeps.

Still no sign or clue rewarded his search and loyalty, and his heart sickened with the suspense. He was sure the king would be held for ransom, for the duke, or even the emperor himself, would not dare put him to death; but it made his blood boil to think of him in prison or in durance. He felt sure that by this time news of his capture must have reached England, and that Queen

Eleanor would do all in her power to help her son, and would invoke the aid of the pope in behalf of one who had served the church so well. But neither the queen-mother nor the pope could do much while Richard's whereabouts remained unknown.

The minstrel pressed on, however, and, as before, stopped at every castle along the noble Danube, and, as before, unavailingly sung the song he wished to hear from other English lips in answer.

Night began to come upon him one day on a road winding high above the river through the forest, but he cared nothing for that, as he was quite willing to wrap his mantle about him and lay down to sleep among the trees. In his easy, swinging stride, he overtook an old peasant walking beside a rude, rattling two-wheeled cart drawn by an ox. As he came abreast, the old man turned up a face as brown and wrinkled as an English walnut and looked at him with a bright eye.

"Good evening, sir," he said, in a shrill,

uneven tone, noting Goodwill and also the lute the handsome stroller carried.

“ Good evening,” returned Richard, slowing down to the old man’s gait. “ Is there a castle near by? ”

“ Aye, sir,—Durrenstein,” answered the peasant, proudly, cocking his shaggy gray head and curiously regarding the stranger.

“ How far? ”

“ A turn of the glass, sir.”

“ By the ox? ” queried Richard, smilingly, thinking the old man meant an hour according to the slow pace of his ambling ox, and therefore fifteen minutes for an able man.

“ Aye, sir.”

As they were speaking, they came to a branch in the road, the river road straight ahead, the other turning to the left and swallowing itself in its own leafy gloom. Directly before them, through the trees, Richard could see the river winding among the hills, shimmering like an expanse of silver, until it was lost to sight to the left.

“ Where does this road lead, good man? ”

he asked, pointing to the branching road. He had no mind to walk farther than necessary, and he had saved his heels many a mile by taking roads that seemed to lead from the river, but which merely saved uselessly following a long curve.

“To Wachua, sir,” answered the old man, bringing his cart to a stop.

“Is there a castle in Wachua?”

“Aye, sir. A fine one, but not like Durrenstein.” The old man pointed to the road straight ahead, his eyes glowing. “You will make merry there, sir,” he said, with a comical air of proprietorship, wishing the stroller to know that his liege lord—who knew not of his existence, probably—was merry and great and hospitable, more than any other; “and they will fill you well with wine and meat.”

“And Wachua?”

The carter shrugged his bowed, work-weary shoulders, but he liked the kindly-spoken minstrel and told the truth. Wachua was a fair place, he said, and was

indeed on the river. There would be a saving of six miles by taking the branching road.

“I’ll go to Wachua,” declared Richard, promptly. He was weary of body, but faint at heart more than all. He had never gone knowingly by a single castle before, but now he determined to pass Durrenstein, which he guessed, judging from the old man, might after all be a miserable pile of stone peopled by poverty-stricken lords, half-soldier and half-robber.

The wrinkled old man eyed Richard’s lute wistfully, timidly, and glanced up and down the stalwart minstrel.

“I heard one of those things once,” he stated in his crackling voice. “Would you play it and sing—for an old man—an old, old man?” He shrank back a little as if he expected a blow in response to his daring request.

Richard nodded, smiling. He had more than once, during the last few days, refused to sing for man in silk and velvet and jewels,

not seldom shunning danger he would have been glad to meet if it had not been for his mission. To sing for any man in Austria or Germany was bitterness to him, but his kind heart was touched now by the bowed old peasant.

The night shadows were lengthening and deepening down the road, but Richard seated himself on the tail of the cart and drew his lute from its covering of soft green leather. He deftly tuned the instrument, while the old man, careless of the hour, stood near by, his mouth agape, and watched him with wonder.

The young minstrel lightly swept his fingers across the strings, and, master of the instrument, played a dashing song, making the old man's eyes gleam with fire and his tongue cry out shrilly in delight. After a pause he played again, a soft prelude like the distant, half-heard cooing of birds in mating time; and then, striking into the full melody on the lute, lifted his mellow, manly voice in King Richard's love ballad, the song

composed in the king's tent before the beleaguered city of Acre. His fine voice, with the silvery lilting accompaniment of the lute, rang gloriously and richly through the dusky woods. Verse after verse he sang, pouring out his heart, thinking of the lord he loved, and quite oblivious of the old fellow whom, in his kindness, he had delayed to entertain like a king.

When at length he was done, he slipped the lute in its case with a little laugh, for, kind as he was, he could not help feeling that he had been foolish to humor the clumsy, aged lout.

The old man, after a tribute of long silence, cackled shrilly and excitedly in his overmastering delight, and waved with both hands down the straight road. Suddenly he calmed himself a little, although his eyes shone with excitement and he mumbled rapidly.

"I think you liked it," said Richard, as he stood erect in the road, and, used as he was to plaudits, he knew that never before had he

sung to one who had more appreciation for his efforts. In the old man's delight he felt repaid for his unbending.

"Aye!" screeched the old fellow, shaking his head very vigorously. He tried to express his pleasure, but he talked so rapidly and excitedly that Richard could not understand his words. "I have heard that song from the castle yon"—he pointed down the road—"many nights, sir, but never like thee sings it. Yet it was the same, for I remember tunes."

Richard stiffened and stared at the excited old man in the vague light, his heart leaping with hope. Could it be that this old man had heard the song? Could it be? If true, it meant that Richard of England was in Durrenstein! But as hope came like a billow into his breast there came also the thought that some one who had heard him in Vienna or along the way might have remembered the song and carried it as far as Durrenstein. And yet who could sing it in English?

“Old man,” said he, quietly, now determined to leave no place unvisited, “I will go on with you to see the castle of Durrenstein—for I am tired and hungry.”

“They will give you a plenty, sir,” declared the old man. He turned his attention to the ox, and at length succeeded in making the clumsy beast move on with the rattling cart.

Richard walked along with renewed hope singing in his heart, ignoring the old man’s incessant chattering, his eyes searching ahead through the woods and hills for the twinkling lights of Durrenstein castle.



“ I HAVE HEARD THAT SONG FROM THE CASTLE, YON.”—*Page 291.*

CHAPTER XV

BEFORE long, after a turn in the road, a great stone building, with battlements and huge towers, appeared to view, perched high above the mighty river on the rocks, grim, colossal, and clear-cut against the evening sky. Yellow lights gleamed here and there in many places in the castle, like stars against black velvet; and directly below them twinkled the lights of humble cottages on the hillside and in small fields.

“That’s the castle, sir,” squeaked the old man, pointing to the great light-spangled silhouette.

Richard nodded. Hope was again in full sway within him, and he did not care to speak.

They slowly descended the hill toward the village, presently losing sight of the castle because of the intervening forest and hills.

The old carter drove his ox into the yard of a neat white cottage on the outskirts of the village, and, as the wagon groaned and rattled on, half a dozen light-haired children came leaping from the little house and gave grandfather a clamorous welcome. Upon the heels of the children came a stout, red-cheeked woman, who also welcomed the old man heartily, although with a touch of impatience.

“My son’s children,” exclaimed the old man to Richard, proudly. “My son’s wife,” he said, when the mother of the children came from the lighted doorway.

The mother and the children became very silent and reserved when they descried the tall stranger with the old man, and made no comment when the grandfather in high praise told of the minstrel’s amazing kindness and of his beautiful singing and playing.

“You are welcome, sir, to such as we have,” said the woman, quietly, studying the wanderer with great doubt, and seeing he

was no ordinary minstrel, "but I fear it will not be greatly pleasing to you."

"I thank you," said Richard, politely, "but I have come to go on to the castle to pleasure your lord there."

The woman nodded, relief in her comely face.

"As you will, sir."

"Indeed you will be welcome here," put in the old man, excitedly, in his squeaking tones. "My son will gladly have you."

"I go on to the castle," returned Richard, bluntly. He turned gravely to the mother, whose children were now clustered about her skirts like little chicks, very sober, staring at him. "Give me the way."

The old man's daughter-in-law gave him plain directions, and with a brief word to her and a cheery good-by to the old man, who had been the means of giving him his new hope, Richard turned from the cottage and strode out into the road making off in the direction indicated.

A good broad avenue led presently to the

right through rugged pines, and into this he turned and went on, leaving the village behind him.

At one time two men on horseback came up the way, but, wishing to avoid questioning and possible trouble, he drew into the darkness of the trees and let them pass unspoken. When they were gone, he resumed his way. Occasionally he could glimpse the river, very far away and very far below; and at length, coming to the edge of the forest, he discerned an open space of field and garden, and beyond that the castle, dotted with cheery lights, backed against the sky.

When he emerged from the woods into the open, he realized that he was on a plateau high among the hills. The castle of Durrenstein itself, a massive structure of dark stone, with high battlements and a hexagonal tower at each southern corner, stood on a gigantic, mighty crag, its outermost wall built upon the brink of a precipice dropping sheer two hundred feet to the broad bosom of the Danube. Upon each side were small

fields of grain, although near the roadway, in the shade of a few sturdy trees, efforts had been made to keep small flower-gardens. In spite of the yellow radiance streaming from many windows, Durrenstein on its crag, like a brooding eagle, did not seem cheerful. The night was cold here among the hills, and the wind, coming across the valley, whistled dolorously in the battlements and among the towers.

Directly before him was a drawbridge, raised high like a great stone, and as he advanced he saw that the crag upon which the castle stood was guarded from the land side by a gorge that dropped away to darkness in the bowels of the mountain. His soldier's eye and mind approved of this grim citadel; and, given food and a handful of brave, true men, he would have sworn to hold it against an army for years. He had seen no stronger position in all his wanderings, and it might well be the place to hold and guard a king for his ransom. What could one man do, however devoted, however brave? It was

impossible to achieve here—aye, impossible. But if war has any virtue, it shows the brave that nothing is really impossible.

With hope in his heart still singing, in spite of his realization of difficulties even if the king were here, he passed along the road till he stood by the great fissure opposite the upswung bridge. He called out boldly for admittance, and three men in the yard before the castle-gate beyond the bridge came forward in response to his hail, their swords glinting and jingling, and asked roughly who he was and what he wanted.

“I want admittance,” returned Richard, curtly, angry at the tones of the soldiers. His long wandering as a minstrel, and not as a noble, however, had taught him patience, and he held himself well in hand.

“Whistle for it,” jeered one of the men. The others laughed at the remark, and would probably have laughed more, if they had known the stranger for one who had come to sing.

Richard made no response for a moment;

he could not, for his lips trembled with his anger.

“I am the English singer of Vienna,” he declared, calmly, “and claim the hospitality of Durrenstein.” He could see the men across the chasm gather in a knot and talk earnestly with one another when he had ceased speaking, and this hesitation in itself made his heart throb. Here was the first place where he had not received a free and hearty welcome, for his fame had gone abroad as on the wind.

“Stand out to the bridge!” cried one of the trio, and Richard, obeying, strode a few paces nearer.

He himself could now make out the rough men-at-arms clearly enough, although the shadow of the great castle and its wall fell out to the bridge, and he knew they could certainly distinguish him and see that he was alone, since there was no cover for an attacking party between the forest-edge and the gorge.

One of the men turned the windlass, the

chains of the draw clanking sharply, and as the bridge began to descend another cried out harshly and stayed his companion's hand.

"Who is behind you, minstrel?" he demanded.

Richard had heard the faint thud of hoofs behind, and at the sharp query he turned and descried two horsemen emerging from the woods and coming toward him. He supposed they were the riders who had passed him in the road.

"It's his lordship on the return," said the soldier at the crank, relief in his voice, but he made no move to lower the bridge farther.

The riders, on splendid bay chargers, came cantering forward in the starlight, their steel breastplates glistening, their long swords jingling, and they drew rein near Richard, who stepped aside calmly, but with a proper show of deference. One of the newcomers was a tall man with massive shoulders; he sat his horse as if molded into the saddle, and yet was as straight as an arrow, and his heavily bearded face was

fierce and stern. His companion was a stout man, too, although not so tall, and he likewise had a savage countenance and a sweeping black beard.

“Down with the draw, rascal,” called the smaller man impatiently, in a harsh voice. “Are you turned to stone?” He looked at the great horseman beside him. “They were most likely asleep, Sir Hugo.”

The big man shrugged his shoulders slightly, but made no response, his keen eyes one moment upon the descending draw and the next upon the silent figure with the lute standing by the roadside.

“Who are you, fellow?” he demanded, suddenly, as the bridge fell with a slight thud into position. He spoke calmly and evenly, but his tone was like the ring of good steel.

Richard declared himself and asked admittance.

Sir Hugo, the Baron of Durrenstein, eyed the stalwart stroller keenly. “I have heard your fame,” he said, at length, decently enough, “but I do not love the English.

Still, I would hear you sing. You may follow in if you wish." As he spoke, he touched his magnificent mount, which had strained for action all the time, and went with a ring of hoof across the planking to the mighty rock upon which the stronghold perched, followed by his companion.

Richard passed quickly after the second horseman, and, ignoring the soldiers, who instantly swung up the draw, advanced toward the open gateway in the high stone wall several rods from the gorge. In the steward's quarters he was well received, and with story and song made himself agreeable. It was only for a king that he would so have comported himself to men who served, but his experience had shown him that one must often rise to the lord on the shoulders of the servant. He had learned much as a minstrel. He had found it wise to scorn the service of no man, however lowly, and had also found that a wise man may get sometimes further wisdom by listening to the talk of a fool.

The steward of Durrenstein was a ruddy-faced, pot-bellied, jolly man, very fond of warlike stories and songs, but with no liking at all for deeds of war for himself. He liked Richard at once, being fond of music, and almost revered him when he learned he had been to the crusade. This jolly little official, although proud and usually contemptuous toward strollers, yielded Richard deference unconsciously, but the young minstrel dared not question him about prisoners who might be held in the two towers.

At ten o'clock the steward, because of his liking for the new minstrel, went to the hall and reminded his stern lord that a troubadour with a wonderfully pleasing voice and songs and stories never before heard in Durrenstein was in waiting, eager to serve those in the hall.

The hall of Durrenstein was a long, high apartment, brilliantly alight with flambeaux in iron sconces and a roaring fire in an enormous fireplace at the farther end, and when Richard entered with his lute

there were present fifteen or twenty men and several ladies.

The baron was not far from the fire, his Herculean frame sprawling in a capacious, cushioned settle, while near him sat his lady and three daughters, Sir Hermon, his nephew, the man he had before seen, and several other fierce-looking fellows, even then armed, apparently the officers of the lord of Durrenstein.

As was his wont, Richard advanced down the hall, his stalwart form erect, his head high, and approached the lord, courteously bowing to him, to his ladies, and then to the others assembled.

“I thank you, Sir Hugo,” he said, calmly, “for this privilege. I shall be happy to do my utmost to entertain you pleasingly.”

Sir Hugo straightened a little and stared at the self-possessed minstrel who met his eye openly and without a sign of embarrassment. He was not sure whether he liked this cool rascal, for most new minstrels paled before him in nervousness, and fawned

and spoke for his favor before they sang or played.

“You ask not for favor,” he said, the words forced from him in surprise. He could not understand the stroller who did not bespeak indulgence.

“Not until I have served, my lord,” returned Richard with a slight smile, quite understanding Sir Hugo’s uncertainty. Within himself he felt a fierce joy that this lord should feel a nervousness for him, and he would have given a year of life to meet him on the open field with Goodwill naked in his hand.

“Sing!” commanded Sir Hugo, gruffly. “We shall see about favor then.”

Richard swept his fingers across the strings of his lute, and, after his prelude, deftly played with fire, he lifted his mellow, ringing voice in the blood-tingling sword-song of Devon. He took Sir Hugo and the hall by storm, and they shouted wildly at the end till the great rafters rang and echoed as with thunder.

Sir Hugo, on his feet, his fierce eyes shining, stretched out his mighty arms and drew his bearded lips in a grim line. Then suddenly, with a laugh almost sheepish, he sank down again, but without reclining.

“It was well done,” he said. “I never heard the like before,” he added. He had not meant to praise so heartily, but he realized that his actions had shown his delight, and he was too fair to begrudge a spoken word, which he deemed would be to a wandering singer, no matter how famous, more welcome and pleasing than gold.

Richard, cool and unmoved, smiled and bowed his thanks all around. It was always a pleasure to have his efforts appreciated, but here he desired to win favor more than ever, so the generous applause and words of praise gave him more satisfaction than he cared to show.

He sang and played for an hour, but he had not worked as a minstrel so long without knowing it was best to end his entertainment before delight was dulled by surfeit; so at

the end of that time he pleaded fatigue and made his excuses.

“ You shall stay in Durrenstein as long as you please, singer,” said Sir Hugo, who excused him reluctantly, “ English though you be.”

“ I thank you, Sir Hugo,” returned Richard, smiling into his face as he perceived the double meaning of the words “ as long as you please.” From the twinkle in the baron’s eyes, he knew that Sir Hugo had that double meaning in mind. As he turned to the ladies, bowing, he noted with a thrill of the heart a quick glance among the men at the baron’s last few words; but, making no sign, he bowed again and left the hall to join the steward, who knew of his success and was waiting for him.

Life in the stronghold on the mountain crag was monotonous enough, but Richard remained day in and day out, singing and playing and telling his stories. He dared make no inquiries of any kind, and dared do little spying. He knew that the baron held

prisoners in the towers, but who or what they were he had no way of finding out without too great a hazard. He was treated exceedingly well and was welcome; but, nevertheless, he could see that all looked upon him with suspicion, and found, too, that he was never unwatched. This did not bother him, but, on the contrary, added to his hope and made him determined to remain in the castle till he found out whom the baron held.

One afternoon well on toward dusk, as he was crossing the courtyard to join the steward, a stout, red-faced, gray-haired soldier came swaggering from the guard-room near the gate and met him face to face.

Richard stood for a moment like a figure of stone. It was as if a ghost had risen from the paving. He was utterly taken aback, but he recognized the soldier on the instant. It was Gregory, the jolly, accommodating rascal who had robbed him on his first night in Vienna.

Gregory also stood motionless, transfixed, remembering the other at once. His jaw

sagged, but, recovering himself quickly, he uttered an easy laugh, careless and contemptuous.

“I have been hoping to meet you, Gregory,” said Richard, coolly, while the blood of righteous wrath burned in him. “If I had met you that morning or soon after, I would have killed you. But—now ——” He swooped upon the thief like an eagle upon a jackdaw, tore his belt off, and punished him till he cried out for mercy. Richard threw him to the flags and dropped his belt, striding off without a backward glance.

Gregory, the most surprised fellow on the face of earth, painfully arose and glared after the minstrel. It did not make him feel better to hear the laughter of a number of men who had seen the singer trounce him. Good nature was gone from his face; his eyes flashed balefully, and he sputtered imprecations incoherently.

Richard told the jolly steward of the encounter, and why he had belted the fellow,

and they both enjoyed the matter thoroughly. Richard himself was pleased, although he truly felt that he had let him off too lightly. Forgetting himself somewhat, he did not dream that Gregory would vow vengeance and be so formidable as to make the throne of England tremble. He did not think that Gregory would try to take revenge against a mere minstrel, for he forgot that the soldier did not know he was a lord. In fact, after telling the steward of the theft in Vienna, and of the meeting in the castle-yard, he dropped Gregory altogether from his thought.

So adventurous a spirit as Richard could not remain long without trying to do something. Waiting might do good, but he knew well that time was important in the extreme and that he would be justified in taking great chances. Richard of England must be found, and must be free, for while his whereabouts were unknown John, his brother, would be doing his utmost to secure the crown of England, in which efforts he

would undoubtedly have the aid, open or covert, of Philip of France.

He deemed it best to make some search in daylight. There were small gardens at the southern end of the castle between the towers and the wall built on the edge of the great chasm opening to the river, and there one morning he carelessly made his way alone, quite openly, his lute under his arm.

He strolled about in the small space, now and then examining the towers which stretched skyward before him, with their narrow, barred windows. The towers, he noted, were constructed of rough stone, and he believed that a skillful, strong cliff-climber with intrepid spirit could scale them. To him who had dared death scores of times for fun in the Devon cliffs it did not seem too difficult. But who languished in those towers? He looked at the narrow windows from his pleasant position and yearned to know. He seated himself with his back to the wall, facing the castle and the two towers on the corners, and leisurely tuned

his instrument. Then he sang, at first softly and then louder. He did not care who came or heard, for he would declare he was practicing.

Louder and louder he lifted his beautiful, carrying voice, suddenly altering his accompaniment and breaking into the love ballad composed in the tent of the king before Acre.

He had scarcely begun the second verse when, as from the sky, there came, to his inexpressible joy, a seeming echo to his tones, yet heavier and not so sweet. He broke off abruptly, his heart thundering and choking him, and then he knew that what he heard was not an echo—for the verse went on, and in a voice he knew! Joy thrilled him through all his being. He lifted his eyes, now misty with tears, and there far above him he saw in a narrow, barred window the face of England's king—his own dear liege lord. Richard of the Lion Heart ceased singing and smiled down upon his loyal minstrel who had gone afoot searching for

him in untold peril through an unknown land. When the song had risen to his lofty prison-chamber he knew that his Devon minstrel stood below. There was no doubt that he was as happy at the discovery as the boy in the little garden by the wall.

Richard yearned to speak, to cry out, but knew he must not. The king waved his hand, as if to tell him to hasten away to tell the world where he was. Richard nodded to signify understanding, and then, lowering his straining eyes, thrummed on his lute and sang again, joy throbbing in his voice, and, without raising his glance, sang the ballad of Acre through to the last word.

After a time, still restraining his desire to see the king, he arose and sauntered from the towers and from the garden. Outwardly he was calm, but within he was raging; his desire and love created a hundred schemes of escape, but not one could his mind approve. And yet, while he knew he should leave the castle at once and speed for England, he determined that on this very

night he would speak to the king and once more kiss his hand. He knew the night would be dark, for there was no moon, and he doubted not that he could scale the rough tower to Richard's window. And there existed in his heart, of course, the wild hope that in some way he could compass the king's release, and that they could flee for England together.

Knowing that it would be difficult to conceal the excitement burning within and straining for expression, he avoided the steward and all others as much as possible, and waited patiently for the night.

The sun went down in its crimson glory, and the stars came out. Then came the now unwelcome order to attend in the hall. He sang far into the evening, but when at last he was free he found the stars had paled in the half light of early morning. There were masses of heavy clouds overcasting the sky, however, and he decided to scale the tower, for he must go in the morning, and it would now be lighter all the time.

He seemed to be alone in the dark courtyard, and, leaving his lute behind, he crept out to the end of the grim castle into the little garden and beneath the great black towers.

In the shadow of the tower in which the king was confined, which was on the outer wall, he unbuckled Goodwill and set it against the stones. The night wind, cold and raw, was whistling over the wall, and the garden was desolate and deserted. With a last look about, he braced himself to the perilous task before him. If he slipped once, he died; if he were seen, death was just as sure. Grasping the projections of the rough stones, he pulled himself from the ground, and with almost incredible skill climbed slowly upward, grasping the protuberances with his sinewy, steel-like fingers and aiding himself by his feet clad in soft doeskin shoes. He flattened himself against the wall, digging his toes into crevices and depressions and clinging with his hands, and by prodigious effort went still up and up,

inch by inch. The wind gripped at him and howled in his ears like an aroused demon, and to his right the precipice dropped sheer away two hundred feet to the river—a mere dark thread. The vast valley of the Danube stretched away for miles and miles, mistily gleaming, like the world seen from a star.

But still up and up and up he went, unafraid and determined, till at length, hot with exertion and breathing hard, he put his triumphant hand on an iron bar of the window in which he had seen the king, and for a moment or two rested, being in a comparatively easy position, his hand upon the welcome bar, his toes secure upon a rough jutting of the wall.

“Siss!” he whistled softly, at the same time striking against the stone with the flat of his right hand.

Almost at once the king appeared, as if he had been waiting. In fact, he showed no surprise, although his face shone with joy in the uncertain light. He had heard

the sound of the boy climbing and guessed that it was Richard.

“ I have found you—at last ! ” cried Richard in a voice husky with triumph and love. “ I have found you, sire ! ”

The king stretched out his hand, and the young minstrel took it reverently, and, clinging to his hold, bent his head and kissed it.

“ I looked for you, boy, ” said the Lion-Hearted, and his simple words of faith stirred Richard with pride and joy.

“ You must escape, sire ! ”

“ No, Richard. Here we can do little. There is no time, boy, to plot. My life is safe. You should have gone this night after seeing me. Yet to see you close and to hear your voice gives me greater joy than I have ever known. You have loved me as man to man. ”

“ Yes ! ” breathed the minstrel.

“ Let not your love and zeal undo us, ” said the king, quickly. “ Get thee down, carefully, and make the best of speed for England. Friends will be on the way to

seek me. Publish my whereabouts to every friendly ear. Thus you can now best serve me. They will ask a ransom, boy; it must be met,—and it will be heavy. I give you this ring,”—he took a signet-ring from his hand and slipped it upon a finger of Richard’s free hand,—“and you shall wear it in England as my authority to do all deeds proper for the raising of the money.” Rapidly now the king told Richard what he must do in England to thwart his brother John and the French king, and to stamp out internal troubles. It was at this time that Richard Cœur de Lion blessed his lucky star that for long he had minded to raise his minstrel to great power, and, with that in mind, had given him numberless instructions on their return from Acre. “Now go, boy,” he commanded at length, “and God’s blessing upon you. You have served your king as no other man ever served king before. You have saved Richard and England! Godspeed you!” He spoke in a broken voice, devoutly grateful for the minstrel’s

coming, and thankful to the boy who in love and loyalty had searched for him so faithfully. Then, giving Richard his hand once more, he withdrew from the window, that neither should make delay by further word.

With one last look into the blackness of the tower-cell,—seeing nothing,—and with one last unfearing stare at the world so far below him, Richard wiped his misty eyes, and, exceedingly careful because he must live for England and the king, began to descend. Slowly, very slowly, he went down, pausing once for a giddiness that almost overcame him, more for joy at the end of his search than for anything else. The way down seemed endless and a hundred times more difficult than the ascent; but at last, with a gasp of infinite relief, he dropped lightly to solid earth and looked up at the towering wall, wondering if, after all, it were not a dream—it seemed so terrible a feat.

When he turned and looked out toward the desolate little garden, a thrill of fear leaped through him like a spurt of flame, and

he stood like stone, now cold with dread. Not ten feet distant stood a great figure clad partly in steel, its arms folded, a plumed hat low on the forehead. Richard gasped audibly, and at that the man threw up his head and dropped his arms from his mailed chest—the spy was the soldier, Gregory.

“You should be torn by the wheel, you English dog, you singer of ballads,” exclaimed Gregory in a low tone of hate, “except that I prefer to spit thee like a cur for the hand you laid on me.”

Richard stood still motionless, the blood of anger beginning to warm him. He had thought the figure to be the baron of Durrenstein, and he recognized Gregory with a vast relief. But fear was in him, because, if the revengeful soldier who had followed him and understood his mission should raise one shout, all would be lost. He would be killed, and England would suffer.

Gregory, with a queer, hoarse laugh, whipped his great blade free, believing he had the minstrel at bay against the castle

wall, unarmed, and unclad in steel. More than this, he did not believe the boy, stout as he was, could be much of a fighter. He expected a very enjoyable moment now.

Thinking hard, Richard backed against the wall in the deep shadow, and with his left hand found Goodwill where he had placed it. Would Gregory fight when he saw the weapon, or would he shout for help? This was the great question. Then he realized that even if Gregory should raise his voice, it would do no harm—provided he killed him before any one came. Fortunately he had told the steward about Gregory, and if the spy were put away quickly, the boy could state that they had come to this spot to settle their differences. With this thought in mind, giving him instant ease and vanquishing his dread, he advanced from the wall into the open, drawing Goodwill as he went.

“You shall have from me, Gregory,” he said, quietly, “what you should have had at first,—cold steel,—though I had scorned to treat you to my Goodwill.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Gregory in surprise as he saw the minstrel’s blade glinting. Why had he not looked for that sword and thrown it away? It was too late. He had courage of a sort, however, and, although he had come to slay a defenseless enemy, he stood his ground. The advantage, anyway, was his, or so he believed, for he wore a steel coat and the other was without armor of any kind.

Without a word they crossed their blades, the Austrian revengeful, the Devon lad grimly determined. Their swords clashed and rang, and Richard, knowing time to be important, pushed the other hard and soon was in a position to bar his egress from the gardens. It was apparent even in a few moments that the minstrel was wholly master of the man-at-arms, and Gregory, seeing this, fought furiously, and at length lifted his voice in a great shout.

Upon the instant that he cried out, Richard, wild with rage, but wary, pressed in and rained his blows like lightning strokes. Few

men, even the greatest of fighters of his time, could stand before the Devon lord—and Gregory was as a boy with a stick. Richard pushed him in toward the wall, and, with a Titan backward sweep, dashed his sword from him, and, without compunction, raised Goodwill on high and drove it down through the spy, through skull, through shoulder, and through mesh of steel. Gregory uttered no second shout.

Breathing hard, and thankful beyond words, Richard drew back from the man who could now give no secret—nor any word nor sound, then or ever. As he stepped away, a half score of the men-at-arms came running into the gardens with lights and surrounded the victorious minstrel and the dead man.

Richard calmly told his tale, that Gregory and he had met to settle their score thus; and the captain of the watch shrugged his shoulders and seemed rather pleased than otherwise. Gregory had not been liked by his companions, and he was, also, a new-

comer, so the men bore Richard no ill will and merely congratulated him on his luck in beating so strong a fighter. In the castle on the following morning the steward expressed his gratification at what had occurred, and was honestly grieved when Richard declared his intention of journeying on in quest of new scenes.

There was no objection raised to his going, although the baron himself, who gave him a parting gift of gold, was sorry to see him leave, and plainly said that he had not half worn out his welcome. The grim old baron went further than his gift of gold in the end; he gave the minstrel a good horse, and even allowed the steward, upon that worthy's request, to ride to the end of Durrenstein with him.

Richard was glad when he turned a curve in the road at last and lost sight of the jolly steward. He rode on rapidly then, having in his heart but the desire to find friends from England and to press on toward home.

On the third day from Durrenstein he overtook two English churchmen, Longchamp and his secretary, whom he instantly recognized when he came abreast, having met Longchamp in London. He disclosed his own identity at once, and told his wonderful news to the two prelates, who were set out to find the king at the queen mother's orders.

The three slipped from their horses in the road, and on their knees offered up thanks.

It was disquieting news the messengers were bringing from England. It had been known for a long time that Richard was held captive by Henry VI, and when the news of his captivity first came, John, the king's brother, had entered into agreement with Philip of France, doing homage for all Richard's continental dominions, although Normandy had refused to accept him as lord while Richard lived. In England he had tried to usurp his brother's throne, but was disputed, and civil war had reigned for a time, during which a French fleet sent to help John was defeated by Archbishop

Walter. A truce was at length declared to await events, and to see whether Richard was to return alive.

The three excited Englishmen tarried but a short time in the road, then, after exchanging news, they parted, the messengers riding joyfully toward Durrenstein, Richard toward England to serve the king as directed.

Through many a danger the young minstrel passed, but one spring day he leaped ashore upon the strand of England,—home, —messenger of the lion-hearted king and his trusted lieutenant to act in all that was necessary for the crown.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ransom of Richard Cœur de Lion was finally set at one hundred thousand marks, and Hubert Walter, who had visited the captive king, returned to England with letters to Queen Eleanor and to the church people requesting that the money be collected as soon as possible. Richard knew well that during this time the emperor, to whom the Duke of Austria had yielded him, was playing false and receiving embassies from both John and King Philip, who would undoubtedly pay large sums to have him held in Germany indefinitely.

Under feudal law the ransom should fall upon the knights of the kingdom, but, because this vast sum could not by any means be secured from them, a tax of “a fourth

part of the revenue and of the movable goods of every man, whether layman or clerk " was levied, and, moreover, cheerfully paid. Even then the amount of the ransom was not forthcoming, so the church was required to give extra contributions for the king, who had lost his liberty through zeal for its cause. " Prelates' crosses, silver hinges from the coffins of the saints, silver in all forms, was heaped up in London, and yet there was not enough."

But it was evident, however, that soon the ransom would be raised, and it was then that Philip of France, in fear, sent John this message—" Beware! The devil is loose again!"

Meanwhile Richard was brought before the diet in Germany as a state prisoner, meeting the charges against him with force and simple dignity.

" I am," said he, " born in a rank which recognizes no superior but God, to whom alone I am responsible for my actions; but they are so pure and honorable that I volun-

tarily and cheerfully render a full account of them to the whole world. The treaties I have concluded with the King of Sicily contain no infraction of the law of nations. I do not understand how I can be reproached for the conquest of Cyprus. I avenged my own injuries and those of the human race in punishing a tyrant and dethroning a usurper; and, by bestowing my conquest on a prince worthy of the throne, I have shown that I was not prompted by avarice or ambition; so much so that the Emperor of Constantinople, who alone has any right to complain, has been wholly silent on the subject. In reference to the Duke of Austria, he ought to have avenged the insult on the spot, or long since to have forgotten it; moreover, my detention and captivity by his orders should have satisfied his revenge. I need not justify myself against the crime of having caused the death of the Marquis of Montferrat; he himself exonerated me from that foul charge, and, had I my freedom, who would dare to accuse me of deliberate mur-

der? My pretended correspondence with Saladin is equally unfounded; my battles and victories alone disprove the false assertion; and if I did not drive the Saracen prince from Jerusalem, blame not me, but blame the King of France, the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Austria himself, all of whom deserted the cause and left me almost single-handed to war against the infidel.

“It is said I was corrupted by presents from the Sultan, and that I joined the crusade from the love of money; but did I not give away all the wealth I seized on capturing the Bagdad caravan, and what have I reserved out of all my conquests? Nothing but the ring I wear on my finger. Have compassion on a monarch who has experienced such unworthy treatment, and put more faith in my actions than in the calumnies of my deadly foes.”

As for Richard of Devon, immediately upon his landing in England he hastened to London and carried his message to Eleanor, the queen mother, who, almost frantic at the

situation of her beloved son, was urging the Pope to raise his voice on behalf of the captive king.

Richard found himself at once in a sea of work, and he busied himself almost every hour in his efforts to preserve peace and order and to secure money toward the ransom of his lord.

Hugh Willock had long before reached England, and, as Richard had desired, had taken up his abode in his young friend's castle. When he received news of Richard's presence in London, he rode at once to the city with Peter, and joyfully clasped the boy in his strong arms, tears running down his scarred, bronzed visage.

Upon payment of part of the ransom and the delivery of hostages in Germany for the remainder, Richard of the Lion Heart was set free, having been a prisoner exactly thirteen months, and, evading his enemies, who thought to seize him as he left Germany, landed on his island kingdom, with Queen Eleanor, Longchamp, the chancellor, the

Archbishop of Rouen, and Richard of Devon.

The king's first act upon reaching England was to give thanks for his release at the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury; and then he marched at once against the rebels of his kingdom and soon regained his own. On the seventeenth of April, four years after leaving England, he was recrowned in Winchester.

He raised Richard of Devon high in his court, making him his principal minister, and loved him dearly.

"You have served me, Richard," he said, "even as one man to another, and you have rendered unto England and your king a service I vow will never be forgotten. You are a noble warrior and a good man. What further can I do as king or man to make glad your heart?"

"Ah, sire," returned Richard with great emotion, "you have covered me with honor in the land. And yet there is one boon I would ask now."

“It is granted,” said the great king, smiling. “What is this one thing more you would have? More land? A greater title? More money?”

“I ask Your Majesty to restore to the crown’s favor the friend of my father, and my neighbor, Sir Hubert Grant.”

For a moment the king was silent; his face grew stern, and his brow lowered.

In a few words his beloved minstrel told of Sir Hubert’s misfortunes and of the infamous plot carried against him by the brave but evil Mercado.

The king still remained silent when the young lord of Devon ceased. He loved the loyal friend who had served him so zealously, but he truly believed Hubert a rebel and one of the lords who had held back taxes. He had once judged against him, and he was slow to reverse his decision, even for Richard. And yet he was not without magnanimity. When he had regained England and crushed out civil war, he had been merciful for his day; and he had been more

than generous in settlement with his brother, John, who had plotted against his crown, his liberty, and even his life.

“Is there nothing else you desire rather than this, Sir Richard?” he asked at length, almost pleadingly.

“Nay, sire. This is in my heart—has been in it since I first sang for you in Dartmouth. And it is, in truth, Your Majesty, an act of kingly justice, for I have made sure of Mercado’s villainy.” He laid before him immediately indisputable proofs, which he had gathered for this hour. The king could not gainsay them.

“You have often spoken boldly to me of kingly duty and honor, boy!” exclaimed Richard, sharply, and then suddenly he laughed. “And made me none the worse king or man,” he added, dryly. “Well—it shall be even as you wish, Richard. I think he has been wronged; I cannot now doubt. You may take our pardon to Sir Hubert when you ride to Devon.”

“I thank thee, sire!” cried Richard with

a full heart, dropping upon his knee and kissing the great king's outstretched hand.

Not many days after this, young Richard of Devon, with his friend Hugh Willock and happy Peter, now a freeman, rode home to Darby. On the way he sought out and found Sir Hubert in the hills and gave him his full pardon, and at this time met his remaining daughter—as fair a flower as bloomed in all England.

Richard, now a great lord of the kingdom, did not forget to reward properly the stout Darby men who had served him so well under the scorching sun of Palestine; and he did not forget to send Franz, the kind landlord of Vienna, a token of his remembrance.

Hugh Willock had a post in Darby under his friend, Richard of Darby, and he grew rich honestly. As long as Richard wielded a sword, Hugh went with him, and in the end died peacefully at home among the Devon hills, served to the last by Hazri, the mute Saracen.

Richard served Richard Cœur de Lion

till the king's death at the siege of Châlus, and thereafter retired to Darby, where, by Sir Hubert's daughter, he left a line of fighting men who have served England for almost a thousand years.

Very often during his life—though he never spoke of it to any man, not even to Willock—he thought of the true prophecy made by the soothsayer of Dartmouth when he started as a boy on his first war: “You shall render unto England's present king a service men shall tell a thousand years.” He could not know how far his name and fame would come down through the centuries; but when he died, an old man, full of honor, he knew that, whatever men might remember, he had served both God and king honestly, whole-heartedly, and unswervingly, as best he could.

THE END

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00020853578